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MITYA'S LOVE

Mitya's Love

by

IVAN BUNIN

Translated from the French
BY MADELAINE BOYD

With an Introduction
BY ERNEST BOYD

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"The soul would have no rainbow
Had the eyes no tears——"

Madame Madeleine Boyd wants to acknowledge her debt in the preparing of this translation to her collaborator, John O'Neal, and to Miss Helen Smith for her comparison of it with the Russian text.

INTRODUCTION

By Ernest Boyd

Ivan Alexeyevich Bunin, whom Gorky has described as the greatest living Russian writer, was born at Voronezh, in 1870, the son of an old family of country gentry, distinguished in art and politics. "All my forebears were country gentlemen, closely attached to the soil and the people, and so were my parents, who owned property in central Russia, in those fertile steppes where the former Moscovite Tsars, as a protection against the Tartar invasions from the South, set up a rampart of colonies recruited from every province in the country. Thanks to that fact, this region saw the development of the richest of all Russian dialects and produced almost all our great

writers beginning with Turgenev and Leo Tolstoy."

Bunin's childhood and youth were spent almost entirely in the country on his father's estates, and in the town of Yelets, so frequently the scene of his stories, where he went to school before proceeding to the University of Moscow. "I began to write, in verse and prose, rather early, and my works were printed at an early date. When I published my books they were usually composed of prose and poetry, some original, others translated (from the English). If these writings were divided according to kinds, I should have four volumes of my own verse, two of translations, and six of prose. Criticism was not slow to notice my works, and subsequently they were crowned several times, receiving in particular the Pushkin Prize, the highest

award of the Russian Academy of Science. In 1909 that institution elected me one of its twelve honorary Academicians, a distinction corresponding to that of the forty French 'Immortals.'"

He was actually twenty-one when his first book—a volume of verse—was published at Orel, the capital of his native province and the birthplace of Turgenev. Twelve years later, in 1903, Bunin was awarded the Pushkin Prize for literature, and had taken his place in the front rank of Chekhov's successors. After the death of Chekhov, in 1904, and the Revolution of 1905, Vladimir Korolenko survived as the representative of the older school of romantic fiction, but he had no followers of importance. The leadership of the new school of Realism fell to Maxim Gorky, about whom were grouped the majority of the rising young novelists,

some of whom are known, in varying degrees, to English-speaking readers: Alexander Kuprin, Leonid Andreev, Sergey Gusev-Orenburgski, V. Veresayev, and Ivan Bunin. All of these writers, at one time or another, have been translated into English, but only Kuprin and Andreev have achieved any measure of recognition in England or America corresponding to their enormous popularity in Russia. Yet, by common consent of competent critics, Bunin is held to be the equal of any other member of the Gorky group, and the superior, in the estimation of some judges, including Gorky himself.

That group was essentially radical in tendency. It was composed of what a German critic has called "the stormy petrels of the Revolution," and of that tendency there is little trace in the author of *Mitya's Love* and *The Gentlemen*

from San Francisco—to mention two of Bunin's most famous and most dissimilar but characteristic works. Although associated with Gorky's famous Znanie publishing house, where for many years all his books were issued, he had no more in common with the revolutionary school than with their antithesis, the group known, for convenience of distinction, as the Symbolists and Decadents. In fact, he is sometimes classified with the latter: with Merezhkovsky, Bryusov, Kuzmin, and Sologub. These writers, however diverse intrinsically, represented a reaction against the Marxian conception of literature, the constant preoccupation with social problems, and the sacrifice of form to content. Unpolitical and unrealistic, it was inevitable that, towards the end of the last century, they should be classed as Symbolists or Decadents.

Ivan Bunin was not really identified with either of the movements, for he contributed to the Symbolist review, *Northern Flowers,* although not a Symbolist poet, just as he was published by Znanie, although not one of the *"Podmaximki,"* or "Comrades of Maxim," as Gorky's authors were called in jocular allusion to their revolutionary creed. His aloof, independent position may explain, to some extent, his tardy recognition. Outside Russia, at least, we know more of the Znanie writers than of their other contemporaries, and in succession to the former we have welcomed Artzybashev, Ropshin, and Alexey N. Tolstoy rather than Andrey Bely or Alexey Remizov. Bunin himself seems to indicate this when he says: "For many reasons I waited a long time before achieving a certain popularity. After my first writ-

ings were published, during a considerable period, I wrote and published only poetry. I kept out of politics and did not touch in my work upon political questions. I belonged to no literary school, and did not call myself a Decadent or a Symbolist, a Romanticist or a Naturalist; I wore no mask and brandished no brightly colored banner. . . ."

Even Bunin's early prose was essentially poetic in quality and mood: in *Ore* the invasion of rural life by industry is symbolised by the fate of an old wooden cross which has stood for years in the fields and has watched the forests gradually disappear from the horizon, has felt the winds blowing drier and hotter, and seen the land come less and less under cultivation. In the end there are no more workers plowing and sowing, but men erecting huts and drilling into

the ground. The cross, with its blackened picture of the Virgin, has fallen into decay. It is no longer appropriate to such a scene and is broken up for firewood.

Gradually his stories became more realistic, and in 1910 he published his first long novel, *The Village,* which was "the beginning of a series of works describing without flattery the Russian people, the Russian soul, in its strange complexity, its depths of light and shade, its essential tragedy." These stories, he tells us, "for many reasons peculiar to Russian conditions, and latterly because of pure ignorance or political bias, aroused excited discussion amongst our critics and intellectuals who constantly idealized the people," but the book, which is assuredly the most ruthless indictment of the so frequently sentimentalized *moujik,*

definitely established Bunin's fame. In a later story, *Sukhodol,* he describes the disintegration of the Khrushchev family, and does for the landowners what he did for the peasantry. In the volume of short stories translated into English under the title of *The Dreams of Chang* are further examples of the author's art in depicting the fundamental barbarousness of Russian life in various phases: *A Goodly Life, A Spring Evening, A Night Conversation.*

The Cup of Life, which gives its title to a second collection of stories published in French, is a counterpart to *The Village* in its portrayal of country town life. In English we have had, so far, only *The Village* and the volume of short stories referred to as *The Dreams of Chang,* although the best story in it is *The Gentleman from San Francisco.* Independently

of all his other work this story attained widespread recognition in English, and, until *Mitya's Love* appeared, it was the most famous, in fact the only famous, piece of writing of Bunin's outside Russia and the Russian language. In its sardonic simplicity this description of an American millionaire's journey alive to Capri and his return to his own country dead is a masterpiece which lingers in the memory with certain of Chekhov's austere marvels of artistic economy.

The transition from the skilful terseness of *The Gentleman from San Francisco* to the tender and romantic lyricism of *Mitya's Love* is abrupt, but readers of stories so various as *Brothers, The Dreams of Chang, Sukhodol* and *Kazimir Stanislavovich* do not need to be reminded of the great versatility of Ivan Bunin. After Turgenev's *First Love*

Russian literature has once more given us a superb study of the intensity and the innocence and the tragedy of young love, of youthful passion which is at once a crisis of the mind and of the body. The plot of such a tale must of necessity be simple and elementary to the point of banality. Bunin is too consummate an artist to be deterred by that fact, and too good a psychologist to attempt any violent variation upon this eternal theme. In a brief but densely packed story he succeeds in showing every facet of first love, its sensuality and its idealism, its ecstasies and despair, all that enters into it of intellectual exaltation and bodily pain.

All of Bunin's sensitiveness to nature is again visible in his descriptive passages, and that curious faculty of his whereby he attains to the psychological and spiritual through the material and

physical is manifest throughout. Thus the idyll, for all its naïveté and youthfulness, is profoundly sensual. Without sacrificing to prurience or to prudery he is able to achieve a complete picture which bears the authentic stamp of reality and beauty, free, in its utter sincerity, from the mawkishness or the furtiveness which have disfigured this type of literature ever since *Paul et Virginie* consecrated a convention of hypocrisy. Instinctive life becomes spiritualized at his touch, and the material world is illuminated and transfigured by the very concentration upon concrete people and things of those imaginative powers which are the secret of Ivan Bunin's art.

MITYA'S LOVE

Mitya's Love

CHAPTER I

THE ninth of March was Mitya's last happy day in Moscow, or at least, he thought so later.

He was walking up the Boulevard Tverskoy with Katya. It was midday. Winter was gradually yielding to spring; it was almost hot in the sun, as if the larks had really come back, bringing with them warmth, light and joy. The ice was melting and everything was damp, drops fell from the roofs, the caretakers were breaking the ice on the pavements and shovelling the wet snow from the roofs.

Everywhere there were crowds of people. Even the clouds seemed to be melting away into thin white smoke and were disappearing into the soft blue of the sky.

The boulevard was black with people as far as one could see, Pushkin's statue rose in the distance, gentle and pensive, the roof of the convent of the Passion shone brightly. But best of all, Katya was lovelier than ever. She walked very close to Mitya, sometimes with childlike confidence; she took hold of his arm and looked up at him, while he, very happy and not a little proud, strode along, like a country boy, so fast that she could hardly keep up with him.

When they were close to Pushkin's monument she burst out: "How funny your big mouth looks when you laugh! How charmingly boyish and awkward you are! Don't get angry. It's your

smile that makes me love you . . . that and your Byzantine eyes. . . ."

Trying not to smile and concealing both his pleasure and his slight annoyance, Mitya looked up at the statue which rose before them against the sky and answered gently:

"Since you speak of childishness I think you are as childish as I am, though you are eighteen. And I look as much like a Byzantine as you look like the Empress of China! All this talk about Byzantine esthetics and style has simply gone to your head. I can't understand your mother!"

"I suppose that if you were in her place you would shut me up in a convent?" asked Katya.

"No, not in a convent, but I would keep you away from Bohemia, from all those so-called artists and all those future stars, from the studios, conservatories and the-

atrical schools," answered Mitya, trying hard to be calm and detached. "You told me yourself that Boukovesky has invited you to supper at Strelna and that Egorov has asked you to pose for a bronze of some dead person or other,—and naturally such a very great honour flatters you!"

"I don't care, I won't renounce art even for your sake. It may be that I am as bad as you so often say,"—although Mitya had never said anything of the sort—"I may be depraved, but you must take me as I am. And please, don't let us quarrel, and stop being jealous, even if only for to-day when it is so beautiful! Don't you know that, in spite of everything, you are the one I love best, the only one?" she asked insistently in a low tone, then, looking straight at him, with her eyes wide open, slowly, thoughtfully,

she recited artificially with a certain coquetry:

Between us there is a mystery,
Our souls are united. . . .

This completed Mitya's annoyance. On the whole, that beautiful day was full of sad and unpleasant things. Katya's joke about his boyishness had been unpleasant; it was not the first time she had made such jokes, intentionally too. Very often Katya showed she was older than he; and then involuntarily, therefore quite naturally, her superiority became evident and Mitya suffered, seeing in that the indication of a secret perversity. This "in spite of everything," "in spite of everything you are the best," pronounced, goodness knows why, in a lowered voice, had been uncalled for; but most unpleasant of all were the lines declaimed in that artificial manner. And yet even the way she re-

cited those lines, which recalled painfully to his mind the set which was taking her away from him and who excited his hatred and jealousy, was borne easily by Mitya on that lovely ninth of March, the last happy day he was to spend in Moscow, as he very often thought afterwards.

That same day, as they were coming back from the Kuznetzky Bridge, where Katya had bought at Zimmermann's a number of pieces by Scriabin, she spoke among other things about Mitya's mother:

"You have no idea how frightened I am at the thought of her!"

Not once since they had been in love had they alluded to the future of their love. Now out of a clear sky Katya was speaking to Mitya of his mother and was speaking of her, not casually, but as if it were understood that his mother would be her mother-in-law. . . .

CHAPTER II

THEN everything seemed to go on very much as usual.

Mitya took Katya to the Art Theatre Studio, to concerts, to literary evenings; or else he went to her house and stayed till two in the morning, thanks to the great freedom Katya's mother gave her. She was a lady with raspberry-colored hair, always smoking, always made-up, a kind and easy-going woman who had for a long time been living apart from her husband, who had meanwhile acquired another family. Katya often came to Mitya's furnished room and as before their meetings were spent in the enchantment of passionate kisses. But Mitya felt that something terrible had happened,

that there was a change in Katya and in her attitude towards him.

How quickly the beautiful period had passed since their unforgettable first meeting, when, though they hardly knew each other, they had felt that what they wanted most was to be together all the time. They had talked from morning till night,—that lovely time when Mitya had unexpectedly found himself in that wondrous world of love he had secretly longed for as a child. They had met during a cold and dry December which every day covered Moscow with hoary frost, illumined by the reddish globe of a sun very close to the earth. Mitya had been carried through January and February in the whirl of the continuous happiness which his love brought him, a happiness which seemed to be perfect,—or almost perfect. And yet it had soon be-

gun to be troubled and embittered. Already it seemed as though there were two Katyas, one whom he had ardently desired and claimed from the very first minute he had known her, and the other, the real, ordinary one who unluckily did not always coincide with the first. But Mitya had never felt it as strongly as he was feeling it to-day!

Of course it was easy to explain. The feminine preoccupations which come with the spring had begun,—purchases, orders, interminable remodellings of this or that. Katya was often obliged to accompany her mother to dressmakers and modistes, and in addition she had to take an examination in the theatrical school she attended. To quiet his mind Mitya told himself every minute of the day that her preoccupation and her abstraction might have perfectly natural causes. But

this consolation did not help at all,—the whisperings of his suspicious heart became louder and more insistent every day; Katya's inattentive manner towards him became more marked and increased his jealousy and suspicions. The praises of the Director of the school had turned her head and she could not help repeating them to Mitya. The Director had told her: "You are the star of my school," and beside the ordinary courses he had given her private lessons during Lent so that she would shine at the examinations. He had the reputation of seducing his pupils; every year he would take one with him to the Caucasus, to Finland, or to foreign countries. Mitya persuaded himself that the Director had designs on Katya who, though she had not flirted with him, knew it also quite well, but Mitya concluded that her relations with

the man were shameful. This thought tormented him greatly, the more so as Katya's indifference became more marked.

It seemed as though Katya were slipping away from him. He could not think calmly about the Director. And if that had only been all! But Mitya felt that there were also other interests more important to Katya than her love for him. In whom was she interested, in what? Mitya did not know; he was jealous of everybody and of everything, and especially of everything which, in his imagination, enabled Katya to live without him. He thought she was being inevitably carried away from him towards a thing the mere thought of which frightened him.

Once in the presence of her mother, Katya said half-jokingly:

"Mitya, on the whole, your opinions

about women are thoroughly old-fashioned and domestic. You'll become a perfect Othello. I wouldn't like to fall in love with you and marry you!"

Her mother said:

"I can't conceive of love without jealousy. In my opinion people who are not jealous are not in love!"

"No, mother," said Katya, who was inclined to repeat other people's remarks, "jealousy shows a want of trust in the person one loves. If I am not trusted, I am not loved," she added, looking away from Mitya.

"For me," her mother went on, "love is made of jealousy. I read that somewhere. It was clearly proved with examples from the Bible, where God himself is described as jealous and revengeful."

Henceforth, Mitya's love showed itself almost solely in jealousy. It seemed to

him that it was no ordinary jealousy, but a very special kind. Katya and he had not yet achieved the greater intimacy, although they had gone very far when they were alone. And now at such times Katya was still more passionate than she had been heretofore. But he began to suspect even her passion and sometimes it gave him dreadful thoughts. All the thoughts which formed his jealousy were dreadful, but there was one which was especially terrible, and which Mitya could not define or even understand. It was that the manifestations of passion, the ones which were so delightful, so voluptuous, more sublime and more beautiful than anything else in the world when Katya and he were together, appeared incredibly repulsive and monstrous when Mitya thought of Katya with another man. At those moments he felt a violent

hatred for Katya, an almost physical disgust. In his eyes all that went on between them was pure, beautiful and charming. But it was quite different as soon as he thought of somebody else in his place. All the beauty was transformed into something lewd and vulgar which aroused in him the desire to strangle Katya—Katya especially, not his imaginary rival.

CHAPTER III

DURING the last week in Lent the day of the examination came at last. Then Mitya's grounds for his hidden torments seemed more justified than ever.

Katya did not see him any more, did not pay any attention to him; she had become a stranger to him, entirely absorbed in her public appearance.

She made a great success. She was dressed all in white, like a bride, and her excitement increased her loveliness. She was enthusiastically applauded. The Director, a self-sufficient actor with sad and impassible eyes, was seated in the front row, giving her advice to enable her to shine even more. He spoke softly but in such a way that the whole room could

hear his voice, which exasperated Mitya.

"More naturally than that!" he said gravely, calmly, with such familiarity and authority that Katya appeared to be his private property. "Don't act, live!" he added, accentuating each word.

It was unbearable. The recitation which provoked the applause was as bad. Katya, disconcerted, at times blushed furiously, sometimes her small voice weakened. She was breathless and it was touching and charming. But she was reciting with the vulgar singsong, with the affectation and silliness which was considered the height of artistry in the set Mitya hated, and which already absorbed all Katya's thoughts. She did not speak naturally, she declaimed her piece with excessive pathos in her voice, with an exaggerated tone of prayer which was entirely unjustified. Mitya was so ashamed

for her that he did not know where to look.

Worst of all was the mixture of angelic purity and perversity in Katya; in her flushed little face, in her white dress which looked very short because the audience, looking up at her, could see her silk-covered legs and her small white shoes. "The young girl was singing in the church," said, or rather sang, Katya with an exaggerated and affected simplicity, talking about a girl of angelic purity. And Mitya felt just then very close to Katya,—as one always does in a crowd when the person one loves is present,—and also a hostility which was almost hatred; he was proud of her, too, conscious that after all she belonged to him, and yet his heart was torn with sorrow: "No, everything is over. No, she'll never be mine any more!"

After the examination there were many happy days again. But Mitya was not so trusting as before. Katya, remembering the examination said:

"How stupid you were! Didn't you feel that I was reciting so well for you alone!"

She was upon his knees. Bending over her, he was kissing her bare white knees and her breasts. He remained silent. He was unable to forget how he had felt during the examination and he could not tell her that he was still thinking those things and that they took hold of him still from time to time with greater or less force. Katya, for her part, could guess his hidden thoughts and, in one of their quarrels, she said:

"I don't understand why you love me, since you find everything about me so ob-

jectionable! Tell me, what do you want of me?"

But he himself did not understand why he loved her so, although he felt that his love, far from weakening, was growing through this jealous struggle he was fighting against some one—wasn't it first of all a struggle against Katya herself?—because of her, because of his love, because of its increasing force and its ever more exacting demands.

Katya had once said bitterly: "You don't love my soul, you only love my body."

They were words she had read somewhere, theatrical words, but in spite of their foolishness and banality, they touched a distressingly insoluble problem. He did not know why he loved, he could not tell exactly what he

wanted . . . After all, what is love? It was impossible for him to say, for in all that he had ever heard or read about love he had never found anything which expressed his emotion exactly. In books, as in life, it seemed as if every one had agreed, once for all, to speak only of a certain kind of love, almost immaterial; or else of what is called passion, sensuality. And his love was like neither, just as Katya was not like Charlotte, Marguerite, Pushkin's Tatyana, Turgenev's heroines nor the women of Zola or Maupassant; just as his own feelings in no way resembled those of Werther, Romeo, Onegin, nor any of the innumerable heroes who were Don Juans and nothing else.

What did he feel for her? What is the difference between love and passion? Was it Katya's soul or her body which

almost made him swoon, which gave him that felicity, verging upon death, that he felt when he opened her blouse and kissed the bloom of her virginal bosom, her bosom which she offered to his lips with poignant docility and the most innocent immodesty?

CHAPTER IV

IN April Katya changed even more. She became unrecognisable.

Her success at the examination was part of it, and yet it was not only that which had transformed her. It was plain that there were other things which had caused the change. Mitya did not understand them, did not know what they were, and was much puzzled. When spring finally came, Katya began to act like a débutante, full of animation and always in a hurry. She wore a new dress almost every day and they were all very plain but very expensive. Now, when in a swish of silk she arrived,—no longer on foot but always in a carriage,—she went quickly through the passage, her face covered by her veil. Mitya was ashamed of the dark

passage. She was still tender with him, but she was always late and stayed only a little while, with the excuse that she must accompany her mother to the dressmaker.

"You see, we are dressed to kill!" she would say and her wide open eyes would shine, gay and wondering. She knew very well that Mitya did not believe her and that she sounded as if she were lying, but she talked all the more, because they had nothing to say to each other any longer.

Now, she almost never took off her hat, she kept her umbrella in her hand, and sat on the edge of Mitya's bed, maddening him by exposing her silk-clad legs. As she was leaving she would say that she would not be at home that evening either for she must go out with her mother again. Then, with the evident intention of duping him and making up for all his "foolish imaginings" as she called them,

she would invariably do the same thing,—she would look furtively towards the door, get up from the bed and, with exaggerated passion, murmur hurriedly:

"Do kiss me!"

She would throw her arms around his neck and tenderly press her graceful body against his. Once in a particularly long kiss, she moved her tongue, pressed her body closer against Mitya's and, drawing away, whispered quickly:

"No, you drive me mad!"

That kiss upset Mitya completely. Where had she learned such kisses? Mitya was absolutely inexperienced, even at kissing—his first winter in Moscow had brought him his first love,—but he understood all that was strange and different in Katya's kiss.

CHAPTER V

AT the end of April, Mitya at last decided to go away to the country for a time. Both he and Katya were tired out and their torture was much more intolerable because it seemed unjustifiable. After all, what had happened, what had Katya done? One day she said to him with the firmness of desperation:

"Yes, go away, go away, I can't bear it any more! We must separate for a while so we can be sure of our feelings toward each other. You have become so thin that mother is sure you have tuberculosis. I am all tired out!"

So Mitya's departure was decided upon. But he was greatly astonished to find, that although sunk in grief, he was

almost happy to go. As soon as he had made up his mind to leave, everything was as it had been when they first met. Because, in spite of everything, he wished passionately not to believe in the phantoms which haunted him day and night! And any little change in Katya was enough to make all the difference in the world!

Katya was again truly tender and loving. He felt it with the infallible sensitiveness of the jealous nature. Again, he was allowed to remain with her till two in the morning, once more they had a lot to say to each other and the nearer the hour of departure came, the more absurd the separation appeared, "the need to be sure of their feelings towards each other." Once, Katya, who never cried, did so, and her tears brought her closer to Mitya and filled him with acute pity

and with the feeling that it was all his fault.

Katya's mother was going to the Crimea at the beginning of June for the whole summer and she was taking her daughter with her. They decided that Mitya should go to Mishkor when he had secured some money and that they would meet there.

He ran about Moscow preparing for his departure like one who, without knowing it, is already in the throes of a grave illness. He was sick, drunkenly unhappy and at the same time wildly happy, softened by the renewal of his intimacy with Katya and her solicitude for him—she had even gone with him to buy straps for his luggage, as if she were his fiancée or his wife—and generally by the return of almost everything which recalled to him the first weeks of their love. And

his surroundings filled him with the same sensation,—the houses, the streets, those who went along on foot, or in carriages, the weather continuously morose as always in the spring, the smell of dust and rain, the church-like smell of flowering poplars behind walls in the small streets; everything spoke of the bitterness of separation, of the delight of the coming summer, of the meeting in the Crimea where nothing would disturb them and where the promise would be fulfilled!—although he was ignorant yet of what that promise was exactly.

Protassov came to see him on the day of his departure. Amongst the more advanced pupils of the High Schools and amongst University students are rather frequently to be found young men who adopt a bantering attitude, both kind and bitter, and the manners of older and more

experienced men. Protassov was one of these. He was Mitya's most intimate comrade, his only real friend, who knew all about his love for Katya, in spite of Mitya's silent and reserved temperament. As he looked at Mitya tying his trunk and saw his hands tremble he smiled with melancholy wisdom and said:

"Good God, what children you two are! And yet, my dear young Werther, it is time for you to understand that Katya is the typical woman and even the chief of police can't do anything about it. You, as a typical man, you hit the ceiling at once, you are at the mercy of your instinct to perpetuate the race, which is, of course, perfectly legitimate and up to a certain point, sacred. Your body is your supreme reason for existing, as Nietzsche pointed out very truly. But it is also legitimate that on that sacred

road you might break your neck. There are, in the animal world, certain species which must pay with their existence for their first and last act of love. Possibly you may not be destined to such a fate if you keep your eyes open and take care of yourself. 'On my word of honour, Junker Schmidt, the summer will come back!' Katya is not the only woman in the world. I see by the efforts you are making to strangle your valise that you do not agree with me, and that she is the only one for you. Well, excuse my indiscreet advice and may Saint Nicolas and all the other Blessed Saints have you in their keeping!"

When Protassov left, after shaking hands with Mitya, the latter, pulling his straps around his pillow and travelling bag, heard through the window opening on the court a singer who lived opposite

and who practised from morning till night. He was singing *The Sultan's Daughter,* who walked about her garden "shining with beauty." Then, Mitya hastened his straps, took his cap and went to say good-bye to Katya's mother. The air and the words of song that the musician had been singing pursued him with such insistence that he saw neither the streets nor the passers-by and he walked even more unsteadily than he had done during the last few days. Again his mind dwelt on the song in which the Sultan's daughter met in the garden a negro slave standing near the fountain "paler than death itself." She asked him who he was and where he came from, and he began by answering her in a sinister but humble tone with mournful simplicity:

My name is Mahomet.....

and ended in an ecstatic and tragic cry:

I belong to the race of the poor Azri
If we love we die!

Katya was dressing to see him off at the station. From her room,—the room where he had spent so many unforgettable hours,—she called that she would be at the station before the first bell of the train had rung. The kind woman with the raspberry-colored hair was sitting alone, smoking; she looked at him sadly, it was quite probable that she had understood and guessed everything long ago. He, blushing and inwardly very nervous, bent his head dutifully and kissed her soft, limp hand, and she with motherly affection gave him several kisses on the temple and made the sign of the cross over him.

"Well, my dear," she said with a shy smile, quoting Griboiedov, "learn to laugh! Christ be with you! Go now, go . . ."

He could not remember how he got out, or rather how he escaped. He almost fell over the carpet in the hall, but to make up for that, he went down stairs with a ferociously firm and angry step.

CHAPTER VI

WHEN he had finished his packing and, with the aid of the porter, had stowed his luggage safely in a cab, he sat back uncomfortably among his belongings, disturbed by the strange feeling which seizes one when leaving a familiar place; dismay that a certain phase of life is ended for ever, combined with the hope that perhaps a new life is beginning. He became calmer and looked around him with courage and with new eyes. The end,—he was saying good-bye to Moscow and all his life there! It was drizzling, the weather was dull again, the narrow streets were deserted, the pavement was dark and shone like iron, the houses were dirty and mournful and the coachman drove with exasperating slowness!

They passed the Kremlin and the Pokrovka; then they again followed narrow crooked streets. In the gardens the jays with their raucous cries were announcing the rain and the evening,—but it was a spring evening. Howlings and whistlings came from the station. At last they arrived and Mitya followed his porter through the swarming and echoing waiting-room to the platform, then to track number 3 where the long heavy train for Kursk was already waiting. Among that immense and ugly crowd assaulting the train, among the porters noisily pushing their trucks loaded with baggage and shouting to keep out of the way, he perceived immediately the one who, "shining with beauty," was standing aside, alone and away from the crowd. She seemed then apart, not only from the crowd but from the whole world. The first bell

had sounded,—this time it was he who was late, it was Katya who was waiting for him. She ran to meet him with the eagerness of a fiancée or a wife.

"Go and get a seat, darling. The second bell will be ringing in a minute."

After the second ring, he stood at the window of a crowded and vile-smelling third class carriage while Katya, more lovely than ever, remained on the platform looking up at him. Everything about her was delightful, her pretty and mobile face, her slim figure, her freshness, her youth in which womanly charm was still mixed with childishness, her bright eyes, her simple blue hat, the shape of which alone gave her a certain rakish elegance, and even the dark-grey suit she wore. Mitya loved its material and its silk lining. Standing, he was tall and awkward, terribly thin. For the journey

he had put on heavy riding boots and an old coat whose worn white buttons showed the red copper underneath. It had been part of his college uniform. But in spite of that Katya's sad eyes were full of love as she looked at him. The third signal gave him such an abrupt shock that with the same impulse Mitya jumped from the carriage and Katya ran towards him. He pressed his lips passionately upon her gloved hand and jumped back into the carriage with tears in his eyes. He waved his cap frantically, while she, holding her skirt and still looking up at him, seemed to be retreating from him. She moved faster and faster and the wind made Mitya's hair wilder and wilder as he bent out of the window. The implacable locomotive gathered speed, with an insolent shriek, until finally Katya and the platform disappeared from sight.

CHAPTER VII

THE long spring twilight was darkened by rain clouds, the heavy train groaned its way through fresh and bare fields,—spring was just beginning in the country,—the conductors passed through the cars collecting tickets and putting candles in the lanterns. Mitya stood near the vibrating window, still tasting Katya's glove upon his lips, still aflame with the sharp pain of the last instant of separation. He saw in a new light the long past winter, full of happiness and torture, which had transformed his whole life. Katya also appeared to him in a new light. Yes, who could express what she was to him, what she meant? Love, passion; soul and body? What is all that? That wasn't

it at all! It was something quite different! The perfume of her glove? wasn't that also Katya, love, her body and her soul? And the peasants, the workmen in the carriage, the woman who was taking her disagreeable child to the toilet, the dull candles in their rattling lanterns, the twilight in the deserted spring fields, all that was love, all that was soul—and it was all torture and it was all undefinable joy!

In the morning they reached Orel, where he had to change and take the local train already waiting on a distant track. Mitya felt how simple, calm, and friendly these people were compared to Moscow people, now so far away, in that far world whose centre was Katya, so touchingly and tenderly beloved! Even the sky, spotted here and there by clouds heavy with rain, even the pure breeze over the

fields was simpler and calmer here . . . The train left Orel slowly, very slowly, and Mitya, seated in the empty carriage, leisurely ate the cakes he had bought at Tula. Then, when at last Orel was left behind, the train went faster and Mitya, soothed by its motion, fell asleep.

When he awoke they were at Verkhovie. The train had stopped and there were a lot of people walking about. It was all very provincial. He could smell the agreeable fumes of cooking in the station restaurant and felt hungry. He ate a plate of soup with relish and drank a bottle of beer and, feeling more tired than ever, went back to sleep. When he awoke again the train was going full speed through a forest of birches he knew well. The next station was his. Again night was falling, a dull spring night. Through the opened window came a smell of rain

and mushrooms. The trees were still bare of leaves, nevertheless the noise of the train seemed greater than in the fields. In the distance the sad station lights were already appearing. Then the green light of the semaphore above them, exceedingly pretty in that twilight among those bare trees, and with a great noise the train switched to another track . . . How delightfully rustic and pleasing was the farm hand, waiting on the platform for the young master! And in Mitya's imagination Katya's beauty shone brighter still . . .

As they drove from the station, through a big village, dirty and springlike, the twilight and the clouds became thicker. Everything was submerged in the extraordinary softness of the closing day, in the heavy silence of the earth, in the warmish night, which seemed one with

the darkness of the low moist clouds. Again Mitya wondered and rejoiced: how simple, calm and poor the countryside was, with its smoked thatched cottages that had already been asleep for a long time, because on Annunciation day the good country people used no artificial light, and how comfortable one felt in the dark, soft warmth of the steppes! The carriage plunged through muddy holes; in a rich peasant's yard some oaks stood still bare and very grim, darkly spotted by rooks' nests. Standing near the house and looking up at the sky, was a strange peasant who seemed to have survived from the Middle Ages; his feet were bare, his smock torn, and he wore a hat of sheepskin over his long straight hair . . . And now a soft rain, lukewarm and perfumed, began to fall. Mitya thought about the girls and the young

women asleep in those houses, about the vast feminine world he had approached last winter through Katya, and magically all his thoughts and sensations mingled confusedly: Katya, the girls, the night, the spring, the rain, the odour of the freshly-ploughed fields ready to be sowed, the smell of the horse and the perfume of her kid gloves . . . Mitya curled up in the carriage, his eyes full of tears, and with trembling hands he lighted a cigarette . . .

CHAPTER VIII

IN the country life began with delightful and peaceful days. During the drive from the station Katya had paled and had seemed to melt in the surrounding country. It was an illusion which lasted only a few days more, while Mitya was catching up on his sleep, was becoming himself again, and was readjusting himself to the life he knew from childhood. The house where he was born, the country, the rustic spring, the barrenness and emptiness of the world, now once more youthful and pure, was ready for a new flowering. But even during those days, Katya was everywhere and at the back of everything, just as a long time ago,—when nine years previously Mitya's father had died, also in the spring—there had been,

for a long time, everywhere and at the back of everything, death.

The estate was small, the house was old and unpretentious, and this simple way of living did not demand numerous servants. A peaceful life began for Mitya. His sister Anya, in the second year of high school, and his brother Kostya, a young cadet, were still at Orel studying and would not return until the end of May. His mother, Olga Petrovna, was as always absorbed in the management of the farm, having no one to help her but an overseer,—the starost, as he was called by the servants. During the day, she was usually in the fields or off to the town on business and she went to bed at nightfall.

That first night Mitya slept twelve hours. The next day, after washing and dressing in his sunny room, which faced east and looked out upon the garden, he

went all over the house, feeling how keenly he was attached to it and how its peaceful simplicity was calming his soul and body. Everything was as it had been for many years. Everywhere was the same agreeable smell. The house had been carefully cleaned for his homecoming,—he came back no longer as a boy, but almost as the young master,—and the floors of all the rooms had been scrubbed. Only the cleaning of the big drawing-room near the hall, used only on state occasions, had not yet been completed. Standing on a window ledge near the door opening upon the terrace, a freckle-faced girl from the village was trying to dry the upper pane, while the lower one reflected a bluish image of her. Paracha, the maid, pulled a big cloth from her bucket of hot water, and walking across the flooded floor on the small heels of her

bare feet, showing her white legs, she said to Mitya with an affectionate familiarity, as with her bent arm she wiped her flaming face:

"Go and have your breakfast. It was not yet daylight when your mother went to the station with the overseer. I don't suppose you even heard her leaving."

And at once Katya imperiously called him back to her in his thoughts. He had caught himself desiring this woman's arm with its pulled-up sleeve, the feminine curves of the girl stretching towards the top of the window, her skirt under which were hidden the firm columns of her bare legs, and joyfully he felt Katya's power, her domination over him. All morning he felt her invisible presence.

With each new day as he gained control of himself again, he felt her presence very keenly and more wonderfully. He

grew calmer and began to rid himself of that sickly sensitiveness, which had made everything in Moscow hurt him,—and probably without any real cause. As he grew more deeply in communion with the spring and the country he forgot the real Katya in Moscow, who had so often and so painfully failed to coincide with the Katya of his dreams and desires.

CHAPTER IX

FOR the first time in his life he was living at home like a grown man, absolutely independent,—even his mother treated him differently,—but above all he was living in spirit with his first love, realising all the secret longings of his childhood and his adolescence. It was for this love he had grown and matured, it seemed that he had been waiting for it since his first day on earth. When he was still a child, a sensation impossible to express in words had fluttered within him, a sensation both mysterious and profound. One day in the spring, in a garden, near a lilac bush,—he still remembered the strong smell of the blossoms,—he was standing near a young

woman, perhaps his nurse. Suddenly the world had been illumined by a celestial light, perhaps from her face, perhaps from the apron drawn tight on her full bosom. It seemed as if a warm current had moved through his body, like a child moving in its mother's womb . . . But that had been like a dream. He had had similar experiences later in his childhood, his early adolescence and during the years he spent at high school. He felt extraordinary attractions, quite unlike anything else in his world, towards some of the little girls who came, accompanied by their mothers, to children's parties; a well-hidden but voracious curiosity at all of the movements of those delightful small beings, who were also quite unlike anything else in his world,—their small dresses, their bows of ribbon upon their small heads. Still, later, in the principal

town of the province, he had felt a much more conscious attraction, lasting a whole autumn, towards a small high school girl who often, in the evening, climbed a tree behind his garden wall. Her liveliness, her roguishness, the round comb in her hair, her small dirty hands, her laugh, her ringing shouts, all had had such an overwhelming effect upon him that he had thought about her all day long, and was sad and sometimes even cried, powerless to control his insatiable desire. Then this feeling had passed off of itself and was forgotten, and Mitya felt attracted towards others, emotions all more or less ephemeral, but all carefully concealed. He had had sharp joys and sharp sorrows caused by secret passions born at dances in the high school. Once, when he was only in his second year, he had almost had a real affair with a girl of sixteen in the

senior class, a tall, dark-haired girl, with very dark eyebrows. For the first time in his life Mitya touched a girl's soft cheek once, once only, and he had felt a blissful shiver, like one he had experienced at his first communion and like nothing he had felt since, even with Katya. But that was all there had been to that adventure; it also was forgotten. For a long time Mitya felt languid in body and his mind was filled with the images of dreams. He saw very clearly now that the enigmatic but charming spring was entering his soul, that before he had met Katya, all his life, all his passionate attractions, his dreams, his hopes, had been only a medley of confused hallucinations and presentiments.

He was born in the country and had grown up there, but during his high school days he had always spent the spring

months in town, except the year before last, when he came home ill during Easter and had spent the whole of March and part of April convalescing in the country. It had been an unforgettable period. For a fortnight he had remained in bed, seeing through the window only the sky, the snow, the garden, the tree trunks and the branches changing every day as the days grew longer and warmer. He looked out, it was morning and the sun was pouring so much light and heat into the room that the flies had come to life and were crawling about on the window panes . . . The next day in the afternoon the sun was on the other side of the house and he saw through the window the bluish white snow, and the sky streaked like marble. There were big white clouds in the blue between the tree tops. The next day there were such clear spots in the cloudy sky,

such a bright moisture on the bark of the trees, so many drops falling from the roof above the window that he was never tired of looking out and rejoicing at the melting snow. Then there were warm fogs and rain, and in a few days the snow had melted and disappeared, a brook was carrying it out of the garden and into the yard, the black earth was showing, new and joyful. Mitya remembered for a long time a day towards the end of March when, for the first time since his illness, he was able to go on horseback through the fields, still stubble-covered, reddish, and uncultivated except where a little ploughing had been done,—they had already started to sow the oats,—and the soil showed dark and fat in its primitive richness. He went straight through the stubble and the ploughed fields to a wood which was spread in the distant valley,

and in the clear atmosphere he could see it bare and small, visible in all its expanse.

Then he went down towards the valley and under his horse's hoofs the thick carpet of leaves from the year before rustled, here dry and straw-coloured and there wet and brown. He crossed ditches full of leaves where the water from the melted snow was still running and where birds of dark golden hue flew out from the bushes almost under his horse's hoofs. The fresh wind came to meet him and his horse plunged victoriously through the damp stubble and the dark ploughed land, breathing noisily, sniffing and snorting with a splendid wild strength.

What had this spring meant to him—and especially that day spent in the fields? It seemed at the time that that spring had been his first real love, that spring when he had been constantly in

love with some one or something, when he had loved all the high school girls and, indeed, all the girls in the universe. Good Lord! how far away it all seemed now! What a very small innocent boy he had been, so simple of heart, with his sorrows, his joys and his dreams, all of them so modest! And now he felt for that little boy a sad and tender pity. His present aimless and unreal love was then a dream, or rather the memory of a marvellous dream. But, now, there was Katya among all those things, Katya who possessed him wholly. Katya, the soul in which all the world was incarnate.

CHAPTER X

ONLY once during the first weeks of Mitya's life in the country was Katya recalled to his remembrance in an unpleasant manner. Very late one evening, excited by the voluptuous day dreams which thinking of Katya always brought him, Mitya stood for a moment on the terrace at the back of the house. It was quite dark and very peaceful and he breathed in the smell of the damp fields. Through the dark clouds, above the uncertain contours of the gardens, small stars were shining feebly as if through tears. And suddenly in the distance something howled wildly, diabolically,—and went on barking, howling. Mitya shivered, steeled himself, and went down the steps carefully into the dark alley from every

corner of which unseen evil beings seemed to be spying on him, and there, again, he waited and listened: what was it, where was it, that thing that had filled the evening so suddenly, so terribly with its cries? "An owl making love probably, nothing else!" he thought, but he stiffened as if the devil himself were present in the darkness. Suddenly another low-toned howl shook Mitya to the depths of his being; somewhere, quite near him, at the top of the alley, there was a crackling, a rustling, and the devil betook himself silently to another corner of the garden. There he barked first, then began a plaintive moaning, asking pardon like a child, crying, beating his wings and screeching with sorrowful delight, screaming and bursting into sardonic laughter as if he were tickled or tortured. Trembling all over Mitya tried to pierce the darkness

and listened intently. But the devil abruptly stopped and after rending the garden with a howl of hopeless despair, disappeared as if the earth had swallowed him. After waiting vainly for the renewal of that amorous horror, Mitya softly went back to the house. All night long he was tortured in his sleep by the same awful thoughts, the morbid imaginings that had changed his love in March. And he thought: "Who knows where Katya is now? She may be loving some one else."

However, in the morning sunshine, his torments of the night before quickly evaporated. He remembered Katya's tears when they had at last decided that he should leave Moscow for a time, he recalled with what enthusiasm she had welcomed the idea that he should come to the Crimea at the beginning of June,

and in what a charming way she had helped him with his preparations for his departure and how she had seen him off at the station. He took out her photograph, looked for a long time at her small coquettish face, and wondered at the purity, the clearness of her eyes, bright, wide open, slightly rounded. He wrote her a rather long and tender letter, full of confidence in their love, and after posting it imagined what it would be like to have Katya's loving and radiant presence continually among all the things which were life and joy to him.

He had not forgotten how he had felt when his father had died, nine years previously. It was also in the spring. The day after his death, his father lay stretched out upon a table, dressed in his nobleman's costume, his big pale hands crossed upon his large chest, his beard

dark and thin, his nose quite white. Mitya had crossed the room hesitatingly and fearfully, he had gone out upon the terrace and looked at the enormous coffin top, covered with gold brocade, leaning against the door. There he had first felt the presence of death in the universe. Death was everywhere, in the sunlight, in the green grass in the yard, in the sky, in the garden . . . He went into the garden, along the avenue lined with lime-trees bright with sunlight, then along the side avenues, brighter still; he looked at the trees, at the first white butterflies, and listened to the faint chirruping of the first birds,—and he recognised nothing. Death was everywhere, from the frightful table in the big room, to the coffin top covered with brocade on the terrace! The sun no longer shone as brightly as before, the grass had lost its freshness, the butter-

flies on the lawn,—the top of which only was warm,—nothing was as it had been twenty-four hours earlier, everything had changed as if the end of the world were near, and the beauty of spring, of its eternal youth, had become sad and joyless. This feeling lasted a long time, it kept recurring all spring whenever he smelled, or thought he smelled in that well-cleaned and well-aired house, that abominable and sweetish odour . . .

Sometimes now Mitya felt the same haunting fear, but it had a different quality this spring. The spring of his first love was altogether different from all other springs! Again his world had changed and was filled with a strange quality neither hostile nor to be feared, but on the contrary admirably suited to the joy and youth of springtime. The world was filled with Katya, or rather

with his desire for her, for that most beautiful of all human experiences, which Mitya wanted to secure from her. He wanted her more and more as the spring days went by. And since she was not there, since he had only his image of her to desire, and that altogether idealised, he felt there was nothing wrong in his innocent and beautiful desire. Wherever he went, whatever he did, he felt it more and more deeply.

CHAPTER XI

FROM the first week of his stay at home he suddenly saw with joy that the spring had only begun. Seated with an open book near the drawing-room window, he looked through the trunks of the firs and pines on the plot in front of the house towards the dirty little stream running across the fields and the village on the hills behind it; in the neighbouring gardens, on the bare century-old birches, the rooks tirelessly cawed from morning till night, excited by their happiness, for they caw only in the spring; on the slopes, the village still looked wild and grey as yet, and only the willows were covered with a soft yellow foliage. Mitya went into the garden. The garden was also bare and dwarf-like but full of light.

Only the lawns were green and strewn with turquoise blue flowers, along the paths the bushes had leaves and in the ravine which crossed the southern and lower part of the garden where there was a cherry orchard, the trees were covered with small white flowers. Mitya went into the fields. They were also empty and grey, the stubbles stood up like the bristles of a hair-brush, the dry pathways were still violet and rough. Everywhere was the bareness of youth at the period of expectancy,—and everywhere was Katya. It was only superficially that his attention was occupied by the girls from the village who worked on the estate, by the workmen in the outhouses, by his walks, his reading, the visits he paid to people he knew in the village, his conversations with his mother, the expeditions in droschki which he made

through the fields with the starost, a retired soldier, tall and very brusque in his manners.

Another week passed. After a night of torrential rain, the warm sun suddenly gathered strength and changed everything, not day by day, but hour by hour. The ploughing went on, the stubble became black velvet, the pathways through the fields green, the grass in the yard thickened, the blue of the sky deepened and grew brighter, the garden was speedily covered by verdure fresh and pleasing to the eye. The grey lilac bushes turned mauve and perfumed the air, on the dark green of their varnished foliage and in the warm spots of light in the avenues appeared swarms of black flies with wings of a shining metallic blue. The branches of the apple- and pear-trees were still visible, hardly touched by a

greyish foliage of a very soft colour, but to take the place of the leaves there were already masses of blossoms. The apple- and pear-trees which spread their gnarled boughs under the other trees were a mass of curly, milky snow. Each day their blossoms became whiter and thicker and smelled sweeter.

All that marvellous time, while Mitya was watching attentively and joyfully all the changes the spring brought in his surroundings, Katya did not fade, did not disappear into the distance. On the contrary she herself became a part of it, her beauty grew as the spring became more and more wonderful, as the garden became more magnificently white and the sky a deeper and deeper blue.

CHAPTER XII

LATE one afternoon, as he came in for tea to the room full of the bright sunshine which precedes the evening, Mitya saw near the samovar the mail for which he had waited in vain all morning. He went quickly to the table,—Katya ought to have answered at least one of the letters he had sent her, a long, long time ago,—and his restless eyes saw a smart envelope on which was the familiar small handwriting. He picked it up and left the house, crossing the garden through its main avenue. He went off into the farthest corner of the garden where it came to an end at a ravine. There he stopped, looked all about him, and hurriedly tore open the envelope. The letter was short, only a few lines, but Mitya was so excited that he had to re-read it

half a dozen times before he understood it. His heart was beating very quickly. "My beloved, my only one!" he read again and again, and the effect of those exclamations was such that he felt the earth disappear from under his feet. He looked up. The sky shone above the garden triumphant and radiant; all around the snowy whiteness delighted his eyes; in the fresh foliage of the far-away bushes a nightingale, feeling already the slight chill which is the precursor of night, sang with strength, clearness and all the sweetness of renunciation,—and the blood flew again to Mitya's face and he felt his head tingle . . .

Slowly he came back to the house—his heart overflowing with love, his cup of happiness filled to the brim. And in the days following, he carried it around carefully, waiting for another letter, happy and even a little proud.

CHAPTER XIII

THE days passed, but no other letter came. "It will come, it will come!" Mitya kept saying to himself, but it did not. Little by little, a hidden uneasiness took hold of him, troubled his happiness and his peace not only in the day time but even at night while he slept.

The garden became more beautiful with varied colors; the flowers were blooming; the giant old maple which dominated the southern part of the garden and could be seen from all sides became still bigger and more imposing, covered as it was to its highest branch with a marvellously bright and leafy richness. The main avenue that Mitya could see through his windows grew higher and more clearly defined; its old limes were

also covered to the top, though they were still transparent in spite of the interlacings of young foliage which spread over the garden a light green veil. Beneath the maple, beneath the trees in the avenue and driveway and all the other leafy trees, a sea of creamy blossoms perfumed the sunny air.

The top of the dense and enormous maple, the faint green mist of the lime-trees, the nuptial whiteness of the apples, the pears, and the wild cherries, the sun, the azure of the sky and every plant in blossom in the lower part of the garden near the ravine, along the principal and smaller paths, or at the foot of the house wall, the lilac, acacia or gooseberry bushes, the burdock, the nettles, the wormwood,—everything delighted and surprised him by its freshness, its abundance and its newness.

The vegetation which surrounded the well-arranged green yard made it on all sides seem narrower and made the house seem smaller and prettier. It seemed to be waiting for visitors. For days at a stretch all the doors and windows were open in every room in the white sitting-room, in the old-fashioned blue drawing-room, in the little boudoir, blue also and decorated with miniatures, and in the sunny library, a big empty room in the angle of the house with ancient ikons in the place of honour and low ash book-cases along the walls. The gaily decked trees came close to the house and looked into all the rooms with their foliage of varied hues, sometimes light green, sometimes dark, with the bright blue of the sky showing between their branches.

But the letter did not come, and Mitya felt uneasy. He knew that Katya did not

like writing, he knew that it was difficult for her to sit down at her table and to find a pen, paper, an envelope, and it was even more difficult for her to remember to buy a stamp and to stop at a letter-box. He told himself that he had felt perfectly contented for a whole fortnight before he received the first letter but, as in Moscow, these reasonable considerations helped him little. The happy and proud assurance with which a few days before he had expected a second letter had left him; he was longing for word and worrying more and more, because a letter like the first ought to have been followed by something more beautiful and more delightful still. But Katya remained silent.

Now he went only rarely to the village and to the fields. For some time he even remained in the library searching the

bookcases, turning over the pages of reviews which had been there drying and yellowing for years. He did not like reading—Protassov had always called him "an illiterate," but in those old reviews were a lot of beautiful verses from the ancient poets, marvellous poems which, of course, almost always spoke of the same thing,—the thing which has inspired and filled all the verses and all the songs since the beginning of the world, and on which his soul was feasting. He found that invariably he could apply them to himself, to his love, to Katya.

It was during a marvellous spring,
They sat on the river bank,
She, in the flower of her youth,
He, a growing boy . . .

Often he stayed for whole hours in the sunny calm of the library, sitting quietly

in an armchair near the open bookcase, torturing himself delightfully by reading again and again:

The people sleep; my friend, let us go into the shady garden;
The people sleep and only the stars look at us.
They can see but dimly through the branches,
They cannot hear us though the nightingale does.
No, after all, he doesn't: he sings too loud.
Only our hearts hear us,
They know how many joys,
How much happiness we have had here.

All those love poems, all those appeals seemed to have been written by him, addressed to the one whom he, Mitya, could not help seeing everywhere and in every-

thing, but sometimes he seemed to find a warning in some of them:

The swans are beating
The calm waters with their wings
And the river undulates.
Come, the stars are shining,
Gently the leaves are rustling
And the clouds gather . . .

Closing his eyes, trembling, he repeated this appeal several times, this cry from a heart filled with amorous passion, eager for triumph and for a happy ending. Then he looked for a long time at the white garden beneath the window, the green bushes, his grandfather's maple, king of the whole garden; he listened to the deep silence of the country which surrounded the house and he shook his head bitterly. No, she did not answer,

she was shining somewhere, in that strange and far away world of Moscow, deaf to his appeal! Was it her place? Had he not said to her:

Do you remember, Marie,
An ancient house
And the century-old limes
Above the slumbering pond,
The silent alleys,
The old deserted garden
And in the high gallery
The ancient portraits?

Inexplicable tears came to his eyes while he read those verses which really fitted his love so little and yet touched him, he did not know why, and made him suffer:

I am yours, dear oak-grove!
But I do not come alone

To ask your protective shelter
Against contrary fate.
I bring to your sacred shades
The companion of my prayers,
My young wife,
With a child in her arms . . .

But more often he was carried away into quite another world:

The warm midday invites me to rest,
Every sound has stopped amongst the leaves.
In each perfumed and gorgeous rose
A brilliant beetle sleeps contentedly.

As he read he dreamed passionately of his meeting with Katya in the Crimea and of the town of Miskhor which he could easily imagine as he had already been twice in the Crimea. Heavens, could it

be possible that after having waited so long, he would never see that burning midday, the roses, the oleanders, the sea flashing blue between the cypresses? Could God deprive him of the happiness of telling her some day:

Do you remember the evening when the sea roared
And in the wild rose-bush the nightingale sang,
And the perfumed branches of the white acacia
Bent caressingly over you?

This insoluble question made him shiver with cold and left him pale; he would look stupidly before him and then slowly he would lower his head. And again, the sadness of his love melted and filled his heart. Something grew within

him, something sinister and cruel, passionate and formidable, like a fatal adjuration:

The swans are beating
The calm waters with their wings
And the river undulates.
Come, the stars are shining,
Gently the leaves are rustling
And the clouds gather . . .

CHAPTER XIV

ONE day, after taking a nap in the afternoon,—they dined at twelve—Mitya came out of the house and walked slowly into the garden. Some girls were working there, as they often did, spading the earth under the apple-trees. Mitya went to sit beside them and chat a little as he was in the habit of doing.

The day was calm and warm. Mitya walked in the sunny shade of the avenue and could see in the distance on his right the white curly branches stretching out under the sun. The blossoming of the pear-trees was particularly vigorous and abundant that year, and all that whiteness against the bright azure of the sky gave a violet reflection. Both the pear-trees and apple-trees had shaken off many

blossoms, and the ground underneath them was covered with faded petals. He could smell their sweet perfume mixed with the odour of manure fermenting in the cattle-yard. From time to time, a small cloud passed in the sky and changed in color from a violent crude blue to a much lighter shade. The putrid smells became softer and sweeter. And all the warm torpor of that spring paradise was filled with the solemn and happy buzzing of drones buried in the curly snow of tree-flowers. All the while, in happy boredom, a nightingale piped as by moonlight.

The avenue ended in the distance at a gate which led to the threshing-ground. Down there, on the left, in the corner of the garden slope, was a dark fir-grove. Near the firs, among the apple-trees, two girls made a vivid spot of color. As al-

ways, Mitya went towards them from the centre of the avenue and bending, passed under the low outstretched branches smelling of lemon and honey which touched his face with a feminine caress; and as always, one of the girls, the thin and red-haired Sonka, as soon as she saw him burst into wild laughter:

"Oh, there is the Master!" she cried, simulating fear. Jumping down from the big branch of a pear-tree on which she had been resting, she rushed to her spade.

On the contrary, however, Clachka, another girl, acted as if she had not seen Mitya and leaned squarely and leisurely on the iron of her spade, her foot covered with a supple shoe of black felt sewn with white flowers. She put her spade in the ground with force and, turning over the clods, began to sing loudly

with a strong but agreeable voice: "For whom is my garden flowering?" She was a tall girl with masculine features, always grave.

Mitya came nearer and sat in Sonka's place on the old pear-tree branch, on which the handle of the plough was leaning. Sonka looked quickly up at him and asked roughly, exaggerating her familiarity and gaiety:

"Have you just got out of bed? You must have been dreaming a beautiful dream? Didn't you hear the nightingale under your window? Watch out! You'll miss your chance!"

Mitya appealed to her and she tried in every way to hide it, but in vain. When he was present she was awkward and spoke nervously, but with constant allusions, obscurely guessing that Mitya's continual air of abstraction was not nat-

ural. She suspected him of paying attention to Paracha, or, at least, of watching her. She was jealous and she spoke tenderly and roughly to him by turns, and she looked at him, sometimes with a longing which showed her feelings plainly, and sometimes with a hostile coldness. All that gave Mitya a pleasurable sensation.

And still the letter did not come. He had stopped living and was simply existing from day to day, and more and more depressed by this perpetual waiting and by the impossibility of finding some one to whom he could confide the secret of his love and of his torment, some one to whom he could talk of Katya and of his hope of going to the Crimea. That was why the allusions Sonka made to his love were pleasing to him. However remote they might be those conversations seemed

to caress the mystery which made him suffer so. He was also moved because Sonka was in love with him, which brought them a little nearer to each other and made her in some way an accomplice in his amorous life. He was filled with the strange hope that Sonka might become his confidante or might even replace Katya up to a certain point. This was only, of course, because Sonka was also a young girl, that mysterious and terrible thing, a woman, the femininity for which he was thirsting so greedily.

Once again, Sonka had unknowingly touched his secret: "Watch out, don't miss your chance!" He looked around him. In front, the dark green mass of the fir-grove was almost black in that blinding light, and the sky through the tree tops was of a particularly splendid blue. The young leaves of the lime trees,

the maples, the elms, all radiant in the sun which shone through on every side, formed above the garden a light and gay shelter, and made patterns of light and shade on the grass, the paths, and the lawns. Under that shelter the white flowers, warm and perfumed, gleaming where the sun penetrated to them, were made of porcelain. Mitya thought:

There is no better shelter in the world
Than sleepy maples with shady foliage;
There are no better tresses in the world
Than the perfumed tresses of her beloved
head . . .

Smiling in spite of himself he asked Sonka: "What chance could I miss by sleeping? I don't know what you mean?"

"Don't say that!" answered Sonka in a quick, curt tone. Mitya was still more

pleased by her seeming doubt that he could be without amorous intrigues. Suddenly she began shouting at a small red calf with a tuft of white and curly hair upon his forehead, which had come slowly out of the fir-grove behind her and had started eating the flounces of her calico dress:

"Will you leave me alone!"

"Is it true that some one wants to marry you?" asked Mitya, who did not know what to say and wanted to keep up the conversation. "I hear the family is rich and the man good-looking but that you have refused him, that you won't obey your father . . ."

"He is rich but stupid. Night comes quickly in his head," answered Sonka at once, secretly pleased. "Perhaps I am thinking of another . . ."

The serious and silent Clachka shook

her head without interrupting her work:

"You're talking nonsense," she said, and added in an undertone, "there will be gossip in the village . . ."

"All right, shut up! Don't preach!" shouted Sonka. "I am not a rook, I know how to take care of myself."

"Who is the other you are thinking about?" asked Mitya.

"Of course, I'll tell you!" replied Sonka. "Look here, I am in love with your old shepherd. When I see him, I feel warm all over! I am like you, I like them old," she went on provokingly, doubtless making an allusion to Paracha, who was twenty and was already considered to be an old maid in the village. And suddenly letting her spade go, with an audacity to which her secret love for the young master gave her a sort of right, she sat down on the ground, let her arms

fall, stretched and spread her legs out. They were covered with beige wool stockings and boots halfway to the knee.

"Well, I have done nothing and I am tired!" she shouted laughingly. "My boots are full of holes," she sang in a piercing voice:

My boots are full of holes,
Their tops are lacquered,
It's all the same
With girls and women!

She cried laughingly, "Come and rest with me in the hut, I am ready for anything!" Her laughter infected Mitya. With a broad shy smile, he slid from the branch and lay down and put his head upon her knees. Sonka pushed him away but he lay down again, thinking in verse —he had read so much verse in the last days:

O Rose, I see you: the strength of happiness
Has unwound your shining bonds
And has sprinkled them with dew.
How immense, unconceivable,
Delightful and marvellous,
The world of love appears to me!

"You mustn't touch me!" cried Sonka, now really frightened, trying to get up and to push away Mitya's head which rested heavily upon her knees.

"If you don't get up," she said, "I am going to shout loud enough to make the wolves howl in the forest. I have nothing for you! It burned, but it is out now! I am loud and thin and I don't suit you at all!"

Mitya had shut his eyes and was silent. The sun scattered through the foliage and the branches and the flowers of the pear-

trees was warming his face. Sonka, with a tender wickedness, pulled his straight strong hair,—"like horse-hair," she cried,—and covered his eyes with his cap. Beneath the nape of his neck he could feel Sonka's legs, the most terrible thing in the world—a woman's legs! The top of his head touched the young girl's belly, he could smell her skirt and her calico blouse. It was all one with the garden in flower and with Katya, with the languorous piping of the nightingales near and far away, the unceasing buzz of innumerable bees, a voluptuous sleep-inducing sound, with the warm air smelling of honey and even with the simple feeling of the earth underneath his back. All tormented him and left him thirsting for an abstract happiness. Suddenly something moved in the fir-grove, burst

out with a gay and wicked laugh, then a clarion "cuckoo" was heard, so sharp, so near, so frightful, so distinct that one could hear the rattling and the trembling of the little pointed tongue. Then the desire to have Katya, the thirst to obtain from her, at all costs, immediately, this superhuman happiness took hold of Mitya so furiously that to Sonka's extreme surprise, he rose suddenly and strode away, shouting back to her with a forced laugh:

"I think I had better go and have tea. I come very near to misbehaving when I am with you!"

At the instant when this passion, this thirst for glory had come to him, under the influence of that voice which had suddenly burst out of the fir-grove with such terrible clearness, burst, as it were, from

the very core of the spring, Mitya knew that the letter would not come, could not come, that something had happened in Moscow, or that something was going to happen, that all was lost, ended!

CHAPTER XV

WHEN he reached the house, he stopped an instant in front of the mirror in the big drawing-room. "Katya is right," he thought, "if my eyes are not Byzantine, they are mad. And how thin I am, how gawky and lanky! Look at those black crooked eyebrows and that straight black hair! It's like horse-hair, just as Sonka says!"

He tried to smile with his big mouth, with that "boyish and charming awkwardness" for which Katya was supposed to love him. As a matter of fact, though forced, his smile made him look much better. He felt, himself, how boyish, how tender and how defenceless it was.

Behind him he heard the quick pattering of bare feet. He turned uneasily.

"You are always looking at yourself in the mirror, you must have fallen in love," Paracha teased him affectionately, as she passed in front of him with a boiling samovar, hurrying towards the terrace.

"Your mother was looking for you," she added, laying the samovar on the tea-table. Turning around, she looked at Mitya keenly and penetratingly.

"Everybody knows, everybody guesses," thought Mitya, and he asked with an effort:

"Where is she?"

"In her room. She is going to have tea now . . ."

The sun had gone around to the other side of the house and was already dropping in the West. Light shadows were cast by the firs and pines which shaded the terrace. Underneath them the prickwood bushes shone all over like glass, as

if in the heat of midsummer. The partially shaded table cloth gleamed white, spotted here and there by glaring sunlight. The wasps were flying over the white bread, the cups, and the cut glass jar full of jam. The whole scene spoke of the beautiful rustic summer and how happy and carefree one could be. He must go to his mother, who naturally understood better than any one what was the matter with him, and show her that he had no great secret. Mitya left the drawing-room and went along the passage on which opened his room, his mother's room and two others which Anya and Kostya occupied in the summer. The passage was dark and Olga Petrovna's room all done in blue. Small and very intimate, it was crowded with the oldest pieces of furniture in the house, work tables, highboys, a big bed, ikons in front

of which burned, always, a night light, although Olga Petrovna was not very religious. In front of the open windows a wide shadow spread over a bed of neglected flowers situated just at the beginning of the central avenue. Beyond that shade, the garden, radiantly green and white, had no protection from the rays of the sun.

Unmoved by this scene, which she knew well, Olga Petrovna, a woman forty years old, tall and thin, dark and serious, her eyes retreating behind spectacles, was seated beside the window in an armchair. She was bent over her knitting, moving her needles rapidly.

"Did you want anything, mother?" said Mitya, stopping on the threshold.

"No, I simply wanted to see you. I only see you at dinner now," she answered without interrupting her work

and with an extraordinary, almost exaggerated calmness.

Mitya remembered the ninth of March, when Katya had said that, without knowing why, she was afraid of his mother; he recalled the adorable meaning which was doubtlessly hidden in those words, and he wanted to rest his head upon his mother's knee and cry bitter tears. He muttered awkwardly:

"But perhaps you had something to tell me?"

"Nothing, except that you seem to be bored lately," answered Olga Petrovna. "Why don't you go and see some of our neighbours, the Metcherskys, for example? . . . A house full of young girls just the right age to get married," she added smiling. "It is a very nice family, in my opinion, and very hospitable."

"I'd like to go one of these days," Mitya

said, making a great effort. "But let's have tea, it is so nice upon the terrace . . . We'll be able to talk," he added, knowing perfectly well that his mother was too tactful and too discreet to come back to such a senseless subject.

They remained upon the terrace till it was time to go to bed. After tea, Mitya's mother went on knitting and speaking about her neighbours and about Anya and Kostya,—"Anya must go up for her examination in August,"—and about the house. Mitya listened, sometimes answering, and feeling as he had the day before he had left Moscow; again it seemed to him that he was in the throes of a very grave illness, and that he was enduring a new separation. Surely something terrible must have happened in Moscow! The separation this time was so agonising that in comparison, their

parting a month ago seemed like a moment of blissful happiness . . .

After his mother had gone upstairs, he walked ceaselessly back and forth for two hours, he went through the large and small drawing-room, the boudoir and the library, to the open window looking upon the garden, on the south side of the house. Through the branches of the pines and the firs the setting sun reddened the windows of the drawing-room. He could hear the voices and the laughter of the labourers who had assembled for their supper near the servants' quarters. As he walked he could see through the library window the bare and colourless azure of the evening sky, and a motionless pink star; against this azure background were drawn picturesquely the green top of the maple and the wintry whiteness of all the blossoms in the garden. He kept

walking on, without thinking about what would be said in the house. His teeth were clenched so tight that he had a headache.

CHAPTER XVI

ONE day, shortly after, his love passed through a terrible crisis.

He had stopped observing the changes the spring and approaching summer were bringing all around him. He saw them and even felt them but they had lost their value and only tortured him more. The more beautiful his surroundings grew, the more he suffered. Katya was haunting him day and night, she was in everything and at the back of everything to the point of absurdity. As each new day confirmed his always more poignant conviction that Katya did not exist any more, that she was doing some unspeakable thing, giving herself and the love which ought to be reserved entirely for him, to another,—then the whole world seemed

to be wrong, useless, painful, the more useless and painful because it was growing more beautiful every day.

On every side life went on the same as usual, accomplishing as best it could what it had to do. He alone stood aside, doing nothing, but aspiring to an equal necessity, a necessity a hundred times greater than all the rest. But at the same time it became clearer and clearer to him how incommensurable and absolutely unrealisable it was.

He hardly slept. The charm of those moonlight nights was incomparable. Softly, softly, the garden grew milky white. Prudently, worn out with delights, the nightingales sang, their songs vying with each other in purity, fineness, clarity and brilliance. The lovely pale moon hung tenderly just above the garden, faithfully accompanied by a soft

breeze and bluish clouds. Mitya went to bed with his curtains open and all night long the moon and the garden looked into his room through the windows. Each time he opened his eyes he looked at the moon and said: "Katya!" to himself with such ecstasy and sorrow that it frightened him. Why indeed should the moon bring her name to his lips? Yet it reminded him of her and, astonishingly, looked like Katya! Sometimes he simply saw nothing. His desire for Katya, the memory of the bond between them when they were alone in Moscow, possessed him with such violence that he trembled as with fever. His teeth chattered and he asked God,—always in vain,—to let him have Katya with him, on the bed, if only in a dream. Once he had gone with her to the Great Theatre, to hear *Faust,* with Sobinov and Chaliapin. Without know-

ing why, that evening had appeared to him particularly wonderful: the wide abyss, already too hot and stuffy, opening under their eyes, the tiers of red velvet and the gold of the boxes overflowing with brilliant dresses, and above the pearly light of a gigantic chandelier; the sounds of the orchestra playing far below beneath the orchestra leader's baton, sometimes with demonic thunder, sometimes with infinite melancholy and tenderness . . . *There was a King of Thule* . . . After the performance he had seen Katya home through the very cold moonlight night, and he had remained with her later than ever before. He had been more than ever exhausted by her kisses and he had taken away with him the silk ribbon with which she tied her hair for the night. Now all through those torturing May nights he could never

think about the ribbon, hidden close by in a drawer in his writing desk, without shuddering.

He would sleep all day and in the evening go on horseback to the village, where there was a station and a post-office. The days were still beautiful. Occasionally it rained, storms and showers came and went, but the warm sun shone again, accomplishing ceaselessly its work in the gardens, the fields, and the woods. The garden had finished its blossoming and was losing its flowers but, to make up for that, it became thicker and darker. Already the woods were covered with innumerable flowers and tall grasses and, through the voices of the nightingales and cuckoos, their echoing shadows called a summons to the depths of their greenery. Long ago, the vast virginal nakedness of the land had disappeared and now

it was entirely covered by rich growing wheat. Mitya spent whole days in the woods and in the fields.

He was ashamed to stay each morning upon the terrace or in the yard, waiting vainly for the starost or some workman coming from the post-office. Moreover, the starost and the workmen did not always have the time to do eight versts for nothing. So he got into the habit of going himself to the post-office, but he also came back with only a newspaper or a letter from Anya or Kostya. His torments had reached the breaking point. The meadows and the groves he went through crushed him with their beauty and their fulfilment and he was beginning to feel a continuous physical pain in his chest which would not leave him. It seemed as if it had settled there for ever. Sometimes, in the middle of a pas-

ture, he would stop his horse and look north into the distance, towards Moscow. Then, blinded with tears, he would bury his head in his horse's mane.

One day towards evening, on his way back from the post-office, he crossed an abandoned neighbouring estate, situated in the middle of a large old park scarcely distinguishable from the surrounding forest of birches. He was going through the *Beautiful Perspective,* as the peasants called the principal avenue of that property. It was bordered by two lines of enormous black firs. Magnificently sombre, very wide and covered with a thick russet carpet of slippery needles, it ended at the old mansion where the two lanes of the avenue joined each other. The red light of the dry and peaceful sun which was setting on the left behind the park and the forest lighted the lower

part of the avenue obliquely, between the tree trunks, illuminating its carpet of golden pine-needles. An enchanted silence reigned,—only the nightingales could be heard from one end of the park to the other. The firs and jasmines surrounding the house smelt so delightful that Mitya thought that the former occupants of that house had been magnificently happy. Suddenly, with heart-breaking clearness, he saw Katya, as his young wife, standing on the old terrace, among the jasmine. He felt his face twist in mortal anguish and he said firmly and in such a loud voice that it echoed from one end of the avenue to the other:

"If I do not have a letter within a week, I shall kill myself!"

CHAPTER XVII

HE rose very late the next day. After dinner he remained upon the terrace, holding a book upon his knees; he looked at the pages covered with words and thought confusedly, "Shall I go to the post or not?"

It was very hot. Above the warm grass and the shiny glass prickwood bushes pairs of white butterflies were chasing each other. He watched them and drove away the flies which stuck to his cheek, and asked himself again, "To go or not to go? Shall I go, or shall I stop these shameful expeditions once and for all?"

Mounted on a stallion, the starost appeared in the frame of the big gate. He looked towards the terrace and then went straight up to it. When he arrived near

Mitya, he stopped his horse and blinked.

"Good morning. Always reading?" Smiling, he looked around him.

"Is your mother asleep?" he asked in an undertone.

"I think so," answered Mitya. "What is the matter?"

The starost was silent for an instant and then said very seriously, "Of course, young master, I don't say that it is bad to read, but there is a time for everything. Why do you live like a monk? Aren't there enough women and girls around?"

Mitya lowered his eyes without answering and looked at his book.

"Where have you been?" he asked the starost without looking up.

"At the post-office, and of course there was no letter, only a newspaper."

"Why 'of course'?"

"Why? Because somebody is writing

a letter and has not finished it yet," answered the starost mockingly and crudely. He was hurt that Mitya refused to take up the conversation. "Here!" he added, handing Mitya a printed circular, and spurring his horse he went away.

"I shall kill myself!" thought Mitya firmly, looking at his book without seeing it.

But at the same time he felt a pain in his side, as one does when one looks down into an abyss from a great height. It was clear that the starost wanted him to meet some one . . .

CHAPTER XVIII

MITYA could not help seeing how absurd his resolve was: to kill himself, to smash his head, to interrupt at one swoop the beatings of his strong young heart, to end all thought and feeling, to become deaf, blind, to disappear from this undeniably beautiful world, which, for the first time, had revealed itself completely to him, to deprive himself for ever of any part in this life where Katya was, and where there was the approaching summer, the sky, the clouds, the sun, the warm wind, the wheat in the fields, the big villages, the small ones, the girls, the estate, his mother, Anya, Kostya, the verses in the old reviews, and somewhere, in the south, Sevastopol, the wonderful lilac

mountains with their forests of pines and beeches, the Tartars, their *arabas* whitened by a warm dust, the suffocating road, blinding in its whiteness, the gardens of Livadya and Alupka, the hot sand near the brilliant sea, sunburnt children and bathers,—and again Katya in a white dress, under a white sunshade, seated on the beach quite close to the splashing waves. His thoughts made him smile with a happiness quite groundless . . .

He knew how absurd it was to think of death, but what could he do? How could he flee from the enchanted circle, so much more painful and intolerable because he was happy there, in spite of himself? It was precisely his happiness which was unendurable, this happiness which the world flaunted at him and in which the innermost core was lacking.

He woke up in the morning and the first thing which attracted his eyes was the happy sun; the first sound he heard was the familiar ringing of the happy bells in the village church, down there beyond the dew-covered garden, full of shade and brightness, of birds and flowers. Even the yellow wall-paper, unchanged since before he was born, was full of joy and charm. But at once his soul was torn with a spasm of ecstasy and fear: Katya! It was Katya's youth which shone in the morning sun; the freshness of the garden was hers; the gaiety and joyfulness of the pealing bells was her gaiety and joyfulness; the old paper on the walls invited her to share with Mitya the same intimate rural existence which his parents and grandparents had fostered on this estate and in this house.

Then Mitya would throw off his

blanket and jump out of bed in his night-shirt, his collar open, with his long young legs, thin and yet strong, still warm from sleep. Quickly he would open the drawer of his desk, take out the beloved photograph and fall almost into a trance, staring at it with hungry and questioning eyes. The seductiveness, grace, mystery, brightness and charm of all that is virginal and feminine was concentrated for him in that one small rather serpent-like head, in her way of doing her hair, in her faintly provocative and yet innocent eyes. Her face shone, enigmatic and gay, inevitably unanswering. How and where could he find the strength to bear this face, so near to him and yet so far away, and now perhaps for ever a stranger to him, which had promised the inexpressible happiness of life and which had lied so impudently, so horribly?

This was the way in which Mitya almost always began his day, and ended it also, a prey to the same tormenting thoughts, to the same heart-rending and contradictory feelings.

That evening when on his way back from the post-office he had gone through Chakovskoé, the old abandoned estate with the black avenue of firs, the exclamation which had slipped out so unexpectedly had expressed very exactly the state of extreme exhaustion which he had reached. While near the window of the post-office, looking down from his saddle at the post-master searching vainly through a heap of letters and newspapers, he had heard behind him the noise of a train approaching the station; that noise and the smell of the engine smoke had upset him, bringing back to his mind the Kursk Station in Moscow and his life in

town. When he passed through the village, in each passing girl of small stature, and especially in the movement of their hips, he found something of Katya. In the country he met a troïka. As it passed rapidly by, he saw two hats, one a young girl's, and he almost cried: "Katya!" The white flowers on the path he associated in his thoughts with Katya's white gloves, and the blue flowers with the colour of her veil . . .

As he reached Chakovskoé at sunset, the dry sweet smell of the pines and the heavy perfume of the jasmine had brought to his mind so keenly thoughts of the summer and of the life that had once been on that rich and beautiful estate that, as he had looked at the red and gold light illuminating the avenue and at the house which rose in the background among the growing shadows, he had seen Katya, in

all the fullness of her feminine charm, coming from the terrace into the garden, almost as clearly as he saw the house and the jasmine.

For some time his image of Katya had been growing paler. Each day it appeared to him more ethereal, more transfigured, but that evening the materialisation had been so strong, so triumphantly compelling, that Mitya had been more frightened than on the day when he had heard the cuckoo above him. And he was right when he cried that he could not endure life like that any longer. Yes, he must have a letter, whatever it might contain, or else renounce her completely; he must come back to common ordinary life, to vulgar love; otherwise it would be impossible and beyond his strength to go on living.

CHAPTER XIX

HE stopped going to the post-office, forced himself to give up his expeditions there by a superhuman effort of his will. He even stopped writing to her. He had tried everything in his letters; passionate utterances of such a love as had never been seen in the world before; humiliating prayers begging for her love or even her friendship; bold inventions representing himself as sick and writing from his bed, in order to draw her attention, if only in pity. He had hinted threateningly that all he could do now was to free Katya and "his favoured rivals" from his presence upon the earth.

After he had stopped writing and trying to provoke an answer and had forced himself to give up hope, though still hop-

ing secretly that the letter would arrive just when he had deceived fate by a feigned indifference, he tried in every way to attain a real indifference, to think no more of Katya, to escape from her power. He began to go to the village again, to visit the peasants, to read whatever came within his reach, to go on business to the bigger villages with the starost and to repeat all the time: "What do I care! Let fate decide!"

One day the starost and he were coming back from a farm in the droschki and, as always, at a very rapid pace. They were both seated as if on a saddle; the starost was in front driving, and Mitya was behind; the bumps jolted them both, especially Mitya, who clung to the cushion looking alternately at the starost's red neck and at the fields flying past before his eyes. As they approached the house

the starost loosened the reins, letting the horse amble along, rolled a cigarette and said, smiling into his open tobacco pouch:

"You were angry with me the other day, but you were wrong. Did I not tell you the truth? Books are all right and one should read a little. But they won't run away, and there is time for everything."

Mitya redd[illegible]id was surprised to hear himself answer, with a feigned simplicity and a wry smile, "But, there is no one to think about . . ."

"What?" answered the starost. "There are plenty of women and girls. You are laughing at me!"

"Girls are deceivers," continued Mitya, trying to speak as the starost did. "One can get nothing out of them . . ."

"They don't deceive. You don't know how to manage them," said the starost

sententiously. "And then, you are stingy. You know, a spoon without anything in it grates the mouth."

"He is a perfect idiot," thought Mitya, but still he went on in the same vein. "I wouldn't be stingy if it were a sure thing and worth my while . . ."

"All right, in that case, everything can be arranged . . ." said the starost, lighting his cigarette, and, as he was slightly hurt, he went on:

"I am not thinking about your roubles or your present, but I'd like to please you. I said to myself as I looked at you: 'The young master is bored! I can't leave him like that.' I always look after my masters. This is the second year I have been with you, and thanks to God, I never had a word of reproach either from you or from the mistress. There are others who don't

care so much about their master's cattle! If they are fed, all right! If not, who cares! I am not like that. I think of the cattle first. I say to the men: arrange things any way you like, but the cattle must be fed."

Mitya thought that the starost was drunk, but the latter abruptly changed his tone of rough good-fellowship. He looked at Mitya over his shoulder questioningly and said:

"Is there any one better than Alenka? A lively piece, her husband is at the mines . . . But, of course, you'll have to make her a little present . . . All right, suppose you spend five roubles altogether, let's say: one rouble for food, some liquor, sunflower seeds and mints; two roubles for her . . . and something to me for my tobacco . . ."

"That's all right," answered Mitya, quite involuntarily, "only what Alenka are you talking about?"

"The forest ranger's Alenka, of course!" said the starost. "Don't you know her? The daughter-in-law of the new ranger. You must have seen her the other Sunday at church . . . I thought at once: 'She's just what our young master needs.' She has only been married two years and she is very clean and nice."

"All right," answered Mitya, smiling wryly, "arrange it."

"I'll get busy right away," said the starost, gathering up the reins. "I'll sound her. But don't go to sleep. She is coming with some other women to-morrow to mend the slope of the garden. Come there. Your books won't run away and you'll have plenty of time to read in Moscow . . ."

He touched the horse and the droschki began to tremble and jolt. Mitya clung to the cushion for dear life and tried not to see the starost's big sunburnt neck. He was looking far away through the trees in the garden and the willows which spread over the village hillside down to the river and the prairies. Something had happened to him, unexpected and quite ridiculous of course, but at the same time it filled his body with a feverish languor. The familiar steeple which rose before him, its cross shining in the setting sun, seemed quite different.

CHAPTER XX

ALL the girls called Mitya "the greyhound" because he was so thin. He belonged to the type of man whose black eyes always seem big and who, even when mature, has neither moustache nor beard, but only a few stiff and curly hairs. The day after his conversation with the starost, he shaved early in the morning and put on a yellow silk shirt, which brightened his tired face and gave him a strange and rather handsome appearance.

He went in the garden about eleven o'clock slowly, trying to look as if he were bored and walking because he had nothing better to do. He went down the steps on the north side of the house. Above the roofs of the stables and sheds and that part of the garden over which

the steeple of the church towered there was a kind of steely grey fog. All was colourless, the air was like the air of a furnace and the chimney in the servants' quarter smelt fouly. Mitya turned around the house and started towards the avenue of limes looking up at the top of the garden and at the sky. From under the vague clouds which came down behind the garden a southwest wind was blowing, feeble and warm. No birds were singing, even the nightingales were silent. Many bees were noiselessly crossing the garden, heavy with honey.

The women were working on the slope near the fir-grove. They were filling in the depressions and the tracks made by the animals with warm manure and dirt which workmen brought from the stables through the avenue; along the avenue itself were scattered wet and shining clods

they had dropped. There were a half-dozen women. Sonka was not there. Her family had at last succeeded in getting her engaged and now she remained at home making ready for her wedding. There were some little girls, still very thin, who nevertheless tried to look grown-up and ready for anything. There was the fat and prepossessing Aniutka; there was Clachka, who appeared more virile and rougher than ever and, of course, Alenka. Mitya saw her immediately among the trees and knew her at once, although he had never seen her before. In a flash, he was struck by the resemblance he found or rather thought he found between Alenka and Katya. It was so surprising that for a minute he stopped, quite taken aback. Then resolutely he went straight towards her, without taking his eyes off her.

She, like Katya, was small and vivacious. She was dressed very inappropriately for the disagreeable work she was doing; she wore a pretty white calico blouse, with red polka dots and a patent leather belt, a skirt of the same stuff, a little pink silk kerchief, red wool stockings and black felt slippers. Her small feet reminded him of Katya, as indeed did her whole attitude, sometimes extremely feminine, but mixed with a great deal of childishness. Her head was small and her eyes were of the same shape and almost as bright as Katya's. When Mitya came near her she was not working. She seemed to be conscious that she was not quite like the others. She was standing beside the starost on the slope, her right foot resting on her pitchfork, chatting brightly.

The starost, his head propped upon

one arm, was lying under an apple-tree, smoking, his coat with the torn lining spread beneath him. As Mitya approached, the starost politely sat on the grass and left the coat for Mitya.

"Sit down, Mitrii Palytch. Have a cigarette," he said in a friendly and detached way.

From beneath his eyelids Mitya looked furtively at Alenka. Her pink kerchief gave her face a very pretty glow. He sat down and, lowering his eyes, lighted his cigarette. He had stopped smoking many times during the winter and the spring, but now he had begun again. Alenka had not greeted him, she acted as if she had not seen him. The starost went on telling her things Mitya could not understand as he did not know the beginning of the conversation. She was laughing, but neither her mind nor her heart seemed to be in her laugh. Into each phrase,

disdainful and mocking, the starost with his rough voice was bringing obscene allusions. She answered pleasantly and as mockingly as he, making him understand that in his conduct with some girl or other he had acted stupidly and like a brute, and at the same time like a coward afraid of his wife.

"One never has the last word with you," said the starost at last, stopping the discussion as if he were discouraged by its futility. "If I were not married, my girl, I would have broken your spirit a long time ago. Better mares than you have been tamed! Come and sit down beside us. The master has a word to say to you."

Alenka looked at them sideways, smoothed her black curls over her temples and did not move.

"Come on, I say! Idiot!" exclaimed the starost.

After thinking a second, Alenka sud-

denly jumped down the slope and crouched two steps away from Mitya lying upon the coat, and looking gaily and curiously straight into his eyes. Then she laughed and asked, "Is it true, young master, that you don't want women? That you live like a monk?"

Mitya blushed with an embarrassed and painful smile. He looked at the hem of her skirt and at her knees and was silent, nibbling a leaf of grass.

"How do you know he does not want women?" asked the starost.

"I know it," answered Alenka. "I have heard it. No, he can't. He has some one in Moscow," she added, winking suddenly.

"There is no one here who suits him, that's why he sees no one," answered the starost. "As if you could understand anything about it."

"What, no one?" said Alenka laughing. "There are plenty of women and girls! There is Aniutka. Who could be better? Come here, Aniutka," she cried in a very loud voice.

Aniutka turned around. She had a plump wide back and short arms, a very comely face, an agreeable and very kind smile. She shouted some words in a singing voice and went back with more zest to her work.

"I told you to come," Alenka repeated in a still louder tone, pounding the earth with her fist.

"I don't want to come. I know nothing about such things," Aniutka chanted joyously. "All his fortune would not be enough for me."

"We don't need Aniutka, we have somebody else in mind, better than she is and much more elegant," said the starost

meaningly. "We know exactly what we want."

He looked at Alenka very expressly. She seemed somewhat embarrassed and reddened slightly.

"No, no," she said, hiding her confusion with a smile. "You won't find anything better than Aniutka. If you don't want her, take Nasta. She is very neat and she has lived in a town."

"That's enough, shut up!" said the starost with unexpected roughness. "Go on with your work. You have talked enough! The mistress is complaining that you are all too lazy."

Alenka rose very gracefully, picked up her pitchfork, but the workman who had been unloading his last cart of manure shouted: "Lunch time!" and pulling the reins sent his empty cart rattling down the avenue.

"Lunch! Lunch!" the women shouted then in several different keys. They threw down their shovels and pitchforks, climbed the slope, jumped down the other side, in a jumble of bare legs and highly colored stockings and ran towards the fir-grove, each one carrying her lunch.

The starost looked at Mitya sideways, winked to indicate that the business seemed to be getting along well and then stood up, saying in a commanding tone, "All right, let's lunch . . ."

Against the dark background of the firs the women made bright spots of color. They settled gaily and haphazardly on the grass, opened their packages and pulled out their lunches, laying them on their skirts between their outstretched legs. They drank from their bottles, some milk, some kvass, and went on speaking, loudly and desultorily, bursting

into laughter at each word and looking all the time at Mitya with provocative eyes full of curiosity.

Alenka leaned towards Aniutka and whispered in her ear. Aniutka could not help smiling, but she pushed Alenka away with force. Alenka, choking with laughter, rolled her head upon her knees and with feigned indignation said to Aniutka in a singing voice that could be heard all over the fir-grove, "What an idiot you are! Why are you laughing like that for nothing? Such fun!"

"Let us flee from sin, Mitrii Palytch," said the starost, "the devil is tormenting them!"

"Young Master," Alenka shouted to Mitya's back, "your advances don't suit Aniutka. She is like a little girl and you are too much like a hermit!"

CHAPTER XXI

IN the yard an acrid smell of burning fat came from the fire in the servants' quarters. They were having their lunch. Under the windows, the dogs, wagging their tails, were begging humbly for theirs. Beyond the prairies past the river, one could see the grey drabness of the village. It was a particularly dull day; the air was still heavy, the same floating clouds were in the sky and the same warm and slight wind blew from the south.

Mitya went to his room and buried his face in his pillow. He could imagine the girls lying down after lunch to sleep under the firs, in the suffocating warmth, their heads covered with their skirts, tucking their bare feet under them.

Alenka would also lie down . . . At the thought that he could have her, now that it seemed no longer doubtful, his heart almost stopped beating.

"What is the matter? What is it?" Mitya asked himself. "Can I be in love with her already? What about Katya? How stupid of me to think that she resembles Katya in any way!"

Katya lived in a world apart, in a different world with nothing prosaic about it, but in spite of that his throat was choked with tears of tenderness and he felt an acute pity for her. He raised his head. Outside the window the wind, still tender and soft, slowly moved the thick foliage of the garden and its trees. The branches were agitated, bending gently. There remained traces of the spring and of Katya everywhere . . . He jumped from his bed and sat down. His yellow

shirt, his fear and his drowsiness made his pale face seem brighter.

"No, I shall send a telegram and go to Moscow!" he thought, absolutely out of his senses. "What if all my fears are only imaginary? Perhaps my letters have simply been lost. Maybe Katya has fallen ill, caught a cold, gone to bed for a few days? Anything may have happened!"

But just then Paracha, with bare feet, entered noiselessly, handed him a newspaper and a postcard and said, "Tea is served," and went out.

The card was from Protassov:

My dear Knight of the Mournful Countenance, excuse the piggish silence by which I have answered all your letters. The reason is very simple, exams and total absence of any news worthy of your

intelligent attention. I have seen K. several times. She seems in a rather bad humor. One of these days, before going to the ancestral halls, I'll write less briefly.

Mitya ground his teeth and, filled with unnatural mirth, threw the card upon his desk and with a resolute step went to have tea.

CHAPTER XXII

THE next day was Sunday and there was no one working in the garden.

It rained heavily during the night. The thunder made the house shake and the garden was constantly illuminated by pale and fairy-like lightning.

But in the morning the weather was beautiful again, everything was simple and happy and Mitya was awakened by the gay and singing peals of the church bells. Without hurrying he washed himself, dressed, drank a glass of tea and started to mass.

"Your mother has already gone," said Paracha to him, affectionately reproachful, "but you are a real Tartar . . ."

There were two ways to go to church:

across the pasture through the gate and turn to the right; or else through the garden by the principal avenue, and then by a road between the garden and the threshing-ground.

Mitya ..nt through the garden.

Everything looked summer-like already. Mitya walked along the avenue, straight towards the sun which shone brightly on the threshing-ground and on the fields. That brightness and the sound of the bells went well together, and made him feel at peace with everything and especially with that beautiful morning. The fact that he had washed and combed his wet black hair and put on his student cap helped to make him feel better, despite the fact that he had not slept all night and had turned about in his head a thousand worrying thoughts. He was seized suddenly with the hope that all his

troubles would have a happy ending, that he would be saved and delivered.

The bells were pealing joyously and were calling to him. The threshing-ground shone brilliantly in front of him; a woodpecker, raising his tuft, was hopping along the rugged trunk of a lime-tree whose light green top was bathed in sunshine. On the lawns the bumble-bees of black and red velvet disappeared slowly into flowers. The carefree birds were singing melodiously all through the garden. Everything was as it often had been during his childhood and his adolescence and recalled to him the happy times that were gone and made him feel certain that God would be merciful and that perhaps he could live in this world, even without Katya. Mitya thought of how he, the young master, the centre of attention, would walk up the steps of the cool

parvis, of how he would enter the warm and sunny church, packed with a crowd of women and girls in their best clothes, smelling of new calico, and how he would see the gold points of the candles trembling in the thick air, and hear the joyful and discordant singing of the choir.

"Indeed, why should I not go to the Metcherskys?" he thought. He smiled, at the memory of their troïka with its best harness stopped in front of the church, its small bells tinkling, and its coachman wearing a sleeveless velvet kaftan and a plumed hat.

He even thought with all the feeling appropriate to an eligible young man about the eldest of the Metchersky girls. He had been thinking about her for a long time. She always treated him with a certain seriousness combined with a kind of mocking indul-

gence, as if she understood him completely. She was supposed to be a beauty, entirely feminine, tall and queenly looking, with beautiful hair and with her large but shapely hips covered by a close-fitting modish skirt . . .

But at this point, Mitya raised his eyes and saw Alenka going by the gate about twenty paces away from him. She still wore her pink silk kerchief and a beautiful blue dress with flounces and new high boots with high heels. She was walking quickly and gracefully and she had not seen Mitya. He hid himself quickly behind the trees.

After letting her pass, he went back precipitately to the house, his heart beating violently. Now he understood that he had wanted to go to church in order to see Alenka and he felt it would not be seemly to see her in church.

CHAPTER XXIII

DURING dinner a messenger brought a telegram from the station. Anya and Kostya were arriving on the evening of the next day. The news left Mitya perfectly indifferent.

After dinner he stretched out on a reed couch upon the terrace, his eyes shut, feeling the heat of the blazing sun and listening to the flies buzzing. His heart was beating painfully and the same insoluble question was worrying him. How would things go with Alenka? When would it be definitely settled? Why had the starost not asked her frankly if she consented, and if she did, where and when? Something else also tormented him. Should he break his firm resolve

not to go to the post-office again? If he were to go once more, for the last time? Would it be stupid? Would he lose his dignity? Or would he only torture himself once more with a deplorable hope? On the other hand what did it matter, just a simple walk really, how could it add to his troubles? Wasn't it plain that everything was over in Moscow? What else could he lose? He had only a week more! If he proved able during that week to save himself in some way or other, through sheer strength of will or even through that girl Alenka, all right. If not, well, all the worse for him.

Suddenly he heard below the terrace a low voice saying, "Young Master? Young Master, are you asleep?"

He opened his eyes. The starost was standing in front of him, wearing a new calico shirt and on his head a brand new

cap. He looked contented, drowsy and slightly drunk.

"Young Master, let us go quickly to the forest," he murmured. "I told the mistress I had to see Triphonus about the bees. Let us go quickly while she rests, or else she might change her mind when she wakes up. We'll take something to Triphonus. He'll soon be drunk. You keep him busy talking and I'll say a word to Alenka. Why let things go on this way? If it is all right, it is all right; if not, to the devil! We'll find something better. Come on, the horse is ready . . ."

Mitya jumped from the couch, crossed the hall, took his cap and went quickly towards the shed where there was a droschki to which a very fiery colt had been harnessed.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE colt started at a great pace and passed the gate like the wind. Opposite the church they stopped a moment at a shop and bought a pound of ham and a bottle of vodka. Then they went on.

Just as they left the village they passed a house at the door of which stood Aniutka in her Sunday best. The starost shouted an idiotic joke in a brutal tone, then with the stupid and reckless bravery of a drunken man, pulled the reins sharply and struck the colt with them.

The colt leaped ahead. Mitya was almost thrown out of his seat and he clung to it with all his might. The nape of his neck was smarting agreeably, the heat of the fields, the smell of the rye blossoming already, the dust of the road, and

the smell of the cart-grease were all brought to him by the warm wind in his face. From the silver-grey expanse of the undulating rye the larks were singing and constantly flying a little way and then returning. In the distance he could see the softly blue forest.

A quarter of an hour later they were already in the forest and flying over roots and stumps. Rapidly they went through the shady road gaily spattered with sun-spots. On each side there were innumerable flowers in the thick, tall grasses. Alenka, in a blue dress, and still wearing her high boots, was embroidering under some green young oaks near the ranger's house.

As he passed in front of her the starost threatened her with his whip and then pulled up at the threshold. Mitya was pleased by the fresh and bitter smell of

the forest and of its young oaks' foliage and deafened by the loud barking of the puppies which were surrounding the droschki. Their furious clamour filled the forest with echoes, but they were a friendly breed and their tails wagged joyfully.

Mitya and the starost jumped out of the droschki, tied the colt under the windows to a dry tree which had been struck by lightning, and entered the house slowly through a dark hall.

It was very clean, very cosy and greatly encumbered by all kinds of furniture. It was very hot because the sun coming from behind the forest shone straight into the two small windows and also because the oven was lighted. They had baked the bread that morning. Theodossia, Alenka's mother-in-law, a small old woman, neat and respectable, with long teeth, was

seated at the table, her back to the sunny windows covered with gnats, her right elbow in her left hand and her cheek resting in her palm. Seeing the young master she rose and made a deep curtsey. After the usual greetings, they sat down and lighted cigarettes.

"Where is Triphonus?" asked the starost.

"He is resting in the cellar," answered Theodossia. "I'll go and get him."

"We're getting on all right!" said the starost with a wink, as soon as the old woman was out.

Mitya had not been able to see anything up till now. He was horribly embarrassed. Theodossia seemed to understand perfectly why they had come. He felt ill at ease. Again the thought that had been worrying him for three days came back: "What am I doing? I must

be mad!" He was like a lunatic who, under the influence of some strange attraction, walks faster and faster towards the fatal abyss which irresistibly draws him, or like a sick man who, at his wits' end, has resigned himself to an awful operation said to be absolutely necessary and the only thing possible to save him! However, he tried to look calm and unconcerned and remained seated, smoking and looking all around him. Above all, he was ashamed at the thought that Triphonus, a peasant who was said to be both shrewd and intelligent, would soon come in and that better even than Theodossia *he* would understand everything at once. But at the same time another thought struck him. "Where does she sleep? In that corner or in the cellar? In the cellar, of course. The summer night in the forest, the little windows

of the cellar without bars or panes, the sleepy murmur of the trees and she, sleeping alone, quite alone. Oh, Katya, Katya! What on earth are you doing?" he thought, full of dread.

CHAPTER XXV

A FEW minutes later Theodossia came back and announced that Triphonus was coming. Then she said to the starost, "Look here, you are the limit. What have you been saying in the village about our Alenka?"

The starost looked astonished and tried to defend himself. A very disconnected conversation ensued. Mitya scarcely understood any of it but from what Theodossia was saying he could gather that the starost had offered to introduce a travelling salesman to Alenka, and that he had told about it in the village and had even hinted that Alenka had already accepted the advances of the salesman. Suddenly they heard steps behind the door.

Theodossia and the starost stopped talking immediately. Triphonus entered and made a deep bow to Mitya without saying a word or even looking at him. He sat at a bench near a table and spoke to the starost in a dry and ill-natured tone, asking him what he wanted and why he had come. The starost hastened to explain that he was sent by his mistress, that she begged Triphonus to come to look at the bee-hives, that the man who was looking after them was a deaf old imbecile, while Triphonus was the only one in the whole province who really understood bees. He pulled the bottle of vodka out of one of his trousers pockets and a piece of ham in a greasy grey paper from the other.

Triphonus looked mockingly at him out of the corner of his eye but rose and took a tea-cup from a shelf. The starost

offered a drink first to Mitya, then to Triphonus, then to Theodossia, who drained it to the dregs with evident pleasure. At last he poured one for himself. After having drunk, he began another round at once, eating some rye bread at the same time with grunts of satisfaction.

Triphonus grew drunk quickly but he did not change his dry and sarcastic tone. After his second cup the starost became stupefied. The talk of the two men assumed an air of cordiality but both of them kept their look of malevolence and suspicion. Theodossia remained silent, looking politely dissatisfied. Alenka did not appear. Mitya had lost all hope of seeing her come and he realised that it was a foolish dream to think that the starost would succeed in "getting a word with her" even if she came. He was absolutely convinced that their journey

was in vain and that it had only brought shame and disgusting thoughts. The starost had simply become drunk and on his own account had also made Triphonus drunk with Mitya's money. Mitya rose and said very sharply that it was time to leave.

"All right, but you have plenty of time," said the starost sulkily and with impudence. "I want to whisper something in your ear."

"You can tell it to me on the way back," Mitya answered, trying to control himself and he added more sharply still, "Let us go!"

But the starost banged upon the table and repeated in the thick tones of a drunken man, "And I tell you it can't be told on the way back! Come out an instant with me . . ."

"Well, what is it?"

"Hush!" muttered the starost, shutting the door behind Mitya. He was tottering, his eyes stared vacantly and he smelt strongly of liquor.

"Hush what?"

"Hush, I say!"

"I don't understand you."

"Hush! She will be ours. I am sure!"

Mitya pushed him away and walked to the threshold, not knowing what to do. Should he wait a little longer, drive away alone, or simply go away on foot?

Ten paces beyond the thick green forest was looming, already invaded by the evening shadows which made it still fresher, purer, and more beautiful. A magnificently clear sun was going down behind the trees through which its red gold irradiated. And suddenly from the depths of the forest, coming, it seemed, from the other side of the ravines, he

heard a tuneful woman's voice, fetching and delightful, echoing through the trees, a voice such as one hears only in summer evenings.

"Hou!" the voice was crying, amusing itself with the echoes of the forest. "Hou! Hou!"

Mitya left the threshold quickly and ran into the forest through the flowers and the grass. The ground sloped down to a stony ravine. Alenka was there chewing a blade of grass. Mitya ran to the edge of the ravine and stopped short. She looked up at him with astonishment in her eyes.

"What are you doing there?" Mitya asked softly, out of breath, his heart beating fast.

"I am looking for our Marussia and the cow. Why do you ask me that?" she said, also softly.

"Well, will you come?"

"And why should I come for nothing? Even if one works by the day, one is paid."

"Who said you wouldn't get anything?" Mitya went on almost in a whisper. "Don't worry about that?"

"When?"

"Well, to-morrow . . . When can you come?"

Alenka thought a while. "To-morrow I am going to my mother's to help shear the sheep," she said, after she had looked carefully around. "In the evening, as soon as it is dark, I'll come. But where? It is impossible to use the threshing-ground, somebody might go by. Will you come to the hut at the bottom of your garden? Only don't deceive me. It won't be for nothing. This is not Moscow," she added, looking up at him with laughing eyes. "They say that in Moscow, the women pay . . ."

CHAPTER XXVI

THE journey back was disgusting.

Triphonus, who did not want to be outdone in politeness, had also produced a bottle and the starost was so drunk that he could scarcely climb into the droschki. Finally he fell heavily into his seat and as the colt was frightened it almost started of itself. Mitya kept silent and looked indifferently at the starost, waiting patiently for the drive to be finished. Again with wild fury the starost made the horse gallop like mad. Mitya, still silent, held on as best he could, looking at the evening sky, at the fields towards the setting sun. The larks were ending their sweet songs. As night approached, the east, already turning blue, was lighted by peaceful and

distant lightning, infallible sign of beautiful weather. Mitya felt all the charm of the gloaming, but now it was quite outside of him. In his thoughts, in his soul, there was only one thing that mattered, the next evening!

At the house, he was told that a letter had come confirming the arrival of Anya and Kostya the next night by the evening train. He felt afraid that they would arrive and would run to the garden in the evening. Perhaps they would go to the hut in the ravine. But then he remembered that they could not come from the station before nine and that they would be given something to eat and some tea.

"Will you go to the station to meet them?" asked Olga Petrovna.

He felt himself grow pale.

"I don't think so. I am not very anxious

to . . . and besides there is no room in the carriage."

"You might ride."

"Well, I don't know . . . What's the use? As I feel now, at any rate, I don't want to."

Olga Petrovna looked at him keenly.

"You are not ill?"

"Not at all!" said Mitya almost brusquely. "Only I am very sleepy."

He went at once to his room, lay down on the couch in the darkness and went to sleep without undressing.

In the night he heard slow music in the distance and saw himself standing above an immense, dimly lighted abyss. It became clearer and clearer, deeper and deeper, more and more golden, more and more brilliant, more and more crowded, all the people gaily dressed and happy, and very distinctly, with sad and poig-

nant tenderness, he heard a song: *There was a King of Thule* . . . He shivered with emotion, turned over on his other side and went back to sleep.

CHAPTER XXVII

THE day seemed interminable.

Like an automaton, Mitya went to tea, to dinner, back to his room, back to his sofa, took from his desk a book which had been lying there for a long time, read without understanding a word of what he was reading, looked long at the ceiling, listened to the usual soft summery noises of the sunswept garden outside his window. Once he rose and went to the library for a book. But that calm and charming old room and its windows, one looking out upon the venerable maple-tree, the other upon the clear sky to the west, recalled to him too keenly the spring days already distant, when he had remained there happily reading verses in old numbers of reviews. The room ap-

peared to him so filled with Katya's presence that he turned around and walked away very rapidly. "To the devil!" he thought, very irritated. "Byzantine eyes! Knight of the Mournful Countenance! To the devil with all the poetical tragedy of love!"

With indignation he recalled his intention of committing suicide if he did not receive another letter from Katya. He came back to his room, settled upon his divan and took up his book again. But as before he did not understand a word of what he read. Sometimes, looking at the book, he thought of Alenka, he imagined her body and was seized with trembling. The nearer the evening came, the oftener this trembling seized him, shook him. The voices and steps in the yard. They were already harnessing the horses to go to the station. All these faint sounds

echoed ominously, just as during an illness when one is lying alone in bed, all around one ordinary life goes on regardless of suffering and therefore strange if not actually menacing. At last Paracha shouted: "Madame, the horses are ready!" Mitya heard the dry tinkling of the innumerable small bells, the stamping of hoofs, the noise of the carriage as it came up to the steps.

"Good God! When will it all end!" muttered Mitya, not moving but boiling with impatience, as he listened to the voice of Olga Petrovna giving her last orders to the servants. The bells began to jingle again, louder this time; then their tinkling was lost in the noise of the carriage going down the hill. This faded away in the distance and everything was quiet.

Mitya rose quickly and went to the

drawing-room. It was empty and brightened by the rays of the clear yellowish setting sun. All the house was empty, strangely empty. With a peculiar feeling, as if he were bidding them good-by, Mitya looked at the silent rooms opening one into the other, the small drawing-room, the boudoir, the library whose window opened on the south to the dark blue horizon of the evening, towards the picturesque top of the green maple above which was shining the rosy point of Antares. Then he looked into the hall to see if Paracha were there. Being convinced that there was no one, he took his cap from the rack, ran back to his room and jumped out of the window, his long legs carrying him far out on the lawn. He stood there a moment, then ran into the garden and crossed it by a small path overgrown with lilac bushes.

CHAPTER XXVIII

AS there was no dew the smell of the garden could not have been very strong. Yet it seemed to Mitya, in spite of his insensibility that night, that never in his life, except perhaps when very young, had he smelt such powerful and varied odors. With uncanny keenness he sensed the acacias, the lilac leaves, gooseberry bushes, burdock, wormwood, the flowers, the grass and even the soil.

After walking a few steps, he thought sadly, "Suppose she should not come, suppose she was playing with me!" Now it seemed to him that all his life depended on Alenka's coming! Among all the smells of vegetation he recognised the evening smoke from the village hearths. He stopped and turned around for an instant.

A beetle buzzed somewhere near him, as if it were sowing silence, peace, and twilight. It was still quite light from the setting sun which filled half the sky with the long uniform rays of the early summer twilight, while above the roof of the house, half hidden among the trees, shone the pointed crescent of the new moon high in the transparent emptiness of the sky.

Mitya looked about, hurriedly made a small sign of the cross upon his breast and entered an avenue bordered by acacias. The path led to the ravine but not to the hut. To get to it he had to bear more to the left so he broke away from the avenue, over the bushes, among the wide-spread branches of the apple-trees, sometimes bending under them, sometimes parting them. A second later, he was at the trysting place.

Full of fear, he entered the hut, whose

darkness smelt of dry and rotten straw. He glanced around keenly and saw, almost with joy, that she was not yet there. But the crucial moment was approaching and he remained near the hut, all ears and all attention. During the day an extraordinary physical emotion had gripped him. Now it had reached its climax. But now, strangely enough, just as earlier in the day, this emotion seemed a thing entirely apart from himself, to have taken possession only of his body and not of his soul. His heart was beating violently while everything else was so astonishingly silent that Mitya heard only the beating of his heart. Silently and tirelessly, delicate colourless butterflies flew lightly among the branches, through the grey foliage of the apple-trees which stood out irregularly against the evening sky. The butterflies made the silence

seem deeper, as if they had charmed and enchanted it.

Suddenly something crackled behind him, and the noise struck him like a thunderbolt. He whirled around and peered into the trees in the direction of the slope; and he saw something black coming towards him under the apple branches. Before he had time to realise what it was, that dark shadow running towards him waved to him boldly: it was Alenka.

Her head was covered by her skirt, she pulled it down and he saw her frightened face brightened by a smile. She was barefooted, and wore only a skirt with a chemise of unbleached linen, under which he could see her young breasts. Everything about her, from her small head covered with a yellow kerchief to her small bare feet, mature yet at the

same time childlike, was so lovely, so attractive, that Mitya, who heretofore had seen her only when carefully dressed and now saw her for the first time adorned only by the charm of simplicity, was inwardly very much surprised.

"Quick!" she whispered gaily and furtively, and then, after looking all around, she disappeared into the sweet-smelling darkness of the hut.

There she stopped for a minute while Mitya, his teeth clenched so that they would not chatter, quickly put his hand into his pocket,—his legs were stiff,—and slipped a crumpled five-rouble note into her fingers. She hid it away quickly between her breasts and sat down upon the ground. Mitya sat beside her and put his arms around her neck, not knowing what to do. Should he kiss her or not? The scent of her kerchief, the

aroma of her hair, the intoxicating odor of her body mixed with the smell of the isba and smoke, all was delightfully pleasant, Mitya knew, but he knew also that the irresistible force of his physical desire could not be transformed into spiritual desire, into ecstasy, into bliss, into a self-absorbing languor. She stretched and lay down upon her back. He lay beside her, pressed himself against her and reached out his hand. With a deep nervous laugh, she seized it and pushed it aside.

"That's forbidden!" she said, and he could not tell whether she spoke seriously or jokingly.

She kept Mitya's hand tightly closed in her own small hand, her eyes looking through the triangular door frame of the hut at the branches of the apple-trees and at the red point of Antares, still lonely. What did her eyes express? What should

he do? Kiss her on the neck, upon her lips? Suddenly, she said quickly:

"All right . . .!"

When they rose, Mitya was already weary with disillusionment. While she arranged her kerchief and smoothed her hair she asked him in an animated murmur, as if he were her lover:

"I have been told that you have been at Subbotino. I hear that the priest there sells his young pigs quite cheap. Is it true?"

CHAPTER XXIX

ON Saturday of that same week the rain, which had been continuous since Wednesday night, was still falling hard.

The downpour that day seemed heavier and the sky blacker than ever. All day long Mitya walked ceaselessly in the garden, crying so hard that he himself was astonished at the energy and the abundance of his tears.

Paracha kept looking for him, shouting in the yard, in the avenue of lime-trees, calling him for dinner and then for tea, but he did not answer her.

The cold was damp and penetrating and heavy clouds darkened the sky; against their dark background the greenness of the garden was by contrast ex-

ceedingly fresh and bright. From time to time a sudden gust of wind sent from the trees a new shower, a deluge of drops of rain. But Mitya saw nothing, paid no attention. His white cap became a dirty grey, his student coat became black, his high boots were splashed with mud to his knees. Wet through, cold, without a drop of blood in his face, with mad eyes swollen with tears, he was a sight to behold.

He smoked cigarette after cigarette, walking with long steps in the mud of the avenues, sometimes wandering aimlessly, without following any path through the tall wet grasses, among the apple- and pear-trees, knocking against the greyish green sponge-like moss on their twisted and rough branches. He sat on the dark benches, soggy with the rain, he went into the ravine and stretched

out on the wet straw in the hut, in the same place where he had lain with Alenka. The cold, the icy dampness in the air, had made his big hands blue, his lips and his sunken cheeks were violet, his face deadly pale. He remained lying upon his back, one leg crossed over the other, his hands under his head, looking with haggard eyes at the roof of dark thatch from which fell big rusty drops of rain. Then his jaws tightened, his eyebrows twitched. He rose suddenly and pulled out from his trousers pocket a dirty and crumpled letter, which he had already read a hundred times since he had received it the day before, late in the evening. It had been brought by a land-surveyor who had come on business to the estate. For the hundredth and first time, he devoured it avidly:

"My dear Mitya, don't bear a grudge

against me. Forget, forget everything that has happened! I am a bad and wicked woman, I am corrupt, I am unworthy of your love, my very dear one, but I love art passionately. I have decided, the die is cast, I am going away—you know with whom—you are so sensitive, dear, so intelligent, you'll understand me. I beg you, do not torture yourself and do not torture me! Don't write to me, my dear love, it is useless!"

When he reached this passage, Mitya crumpled the letter furiously, fell upon his side, his face buried in the wet straw, clenched his teeth with rage and choked with sobs. This unexpected "my dear love" in such a letter recalled to him their intimacy so vividly and even seemed to re-establish it so that it filled his heart with an unbearable tenderness. And just beside that "my dear love," the firm dec-

laration that it was henceforth useless to write to her, even to write! Yes, yes, he knew it; it was useless! Everything was over! She had fallen, she was soiled for ever, without hope of forgiveness! And his complete impotence was as boundless as was his love, his tenderness, and his disgust at the thought of her!

Towards evening the rain fell upon the garden with renewed violence and a sudden peal of thunder drove him at last to the house. Wet through, his teeth chattering, his body in the grip of an icy shiver, he looked through the trees to be sure that nobody could see him, then ran to his window, opened it half-way,—it was an old-fashioned window, only the lower part of it could be raised,—and jumping into his room, locked the door and threw himself upon his bed.

The darkness came quickly. He heard

the pattering rain everywhere, upon the roof, around the house and in the garden. Indoors the noise was double that in the garden, for near the house the noise of the rain was mixed with the gurgling and the chattering of the gutters as they poured their waters into the puddles. As Mitya fell into a lethargic stupor, the sound of the rain combined with the fever burning in his veins and the throbbing in his head, created in him an inexplicable numbness and plunged him into a kind of drowsiness which seemed to create another world for him. It was still nightfall but he seemed to be in another house, a strange one, in which something terrible was taking place.

He knew that he was in his room, darkened already by the rain and by the approaching night, that not very far away from him, from the drawing-room, came

the voices of Anya, Kostya and the surveyor at the tea-table, but at the same time he was walking in an unknown drawing-room behind a young serving girl who kept getting away from him. He was seized with a growing fear, mixed, however, with desire and with a presentiment of some person's intimacy with another, an intimacy in which there was something monstrous and infamous, but in which he participated up to a certain point. He seemed to understand all this through the intermediary of a child with a large white face (the child was also a painting on the wall), whom the young servant had in her arms and was rocking. Mitya kept trying to pass her. After he had finally passed her he wanted to look at her face. Wasn't it Alenka? Suddenly he found himself in his study at college with the panes covered with chalk,

but the girl standing beside the chest of drawers, near the mirror, could not see him for he had become invisible. She wore a petticoat of yellow silk clinging to her round hips, small shoes with high heels, very transparent black stockings which showed her flesh, and she was voluptuously shy and modest. She knew what was going to happen. She had had time to hide the child in one of the drawers.

Throwing her hair over her shoulder, she braided it quickly, occasionally glancing sideways at the door, then looking at herself in a mirror which reflected her delicate powdered features, her bare shoulders, her small milky breasts with the pink points. The door opened and a gentleman in a smoking jacket with a smoothly-shaven face and curly, short, black hair entered, turned around with

an air of assurance, pulled out his flat gold cigarette case and began to smoke with perfect composure. While she finished braiding her hair, she looked at him shyly, knowing his intentions, then threw her braid over her back. He seized her condescendingly around the waist and she nestled against him, hiding her face on his breast.

CHAPTER XXX

MITYA came back to himself, bathed in sweat, realizing with an awful clearness that he was lost, that this world was so dreadful, so sombre, that even hell, on the other side of the tomb, could not be worse. It was very dark in the room. Outside the window, he could hear the water splashing and rippling and that noise was unbearable to his body shaken by tremors. But most unbearable, most horrible of all was the monstrous infamy of that human contact that he had, in some way, shared with the gentleman of the shaven face. From the drawing-room came the sound of voices and laughter. They also were monstrous and horrible, in so far as they were strange to him, in so far as they were part of life with its

brutality, indifference and implacability . . .

"Katya!" he said, sitting up on the edge of the bed, his legs dangling over the side —"Katya, what is the matter?" he said aloud, absolutely sure that she would hear him, that she was there, and that if she were silent, it was because she was herself crushed and understood the horror of what she had done, even if she did not answer, that she knew her action was irreparable and inseparable of herself. "Ah, Katya, what does it matter?" he muttered bitterly and tenderly, meaning that he would forgive her everything as long as she would throw herself in his arms as she used to; so long as they could be saved together; so long as their beautiful love could be kept alive in that magnificent spring world, which so recently had been like paradise! But having murmured: "Katya, what does it matter!" he

knew at once that he could not say that it did not matter; there was no salvation, no return to the marvellous vision which had been given to him at Chakovskoé on the terrace covered with jasmine, there never could be; and slowly he cried tears of sorrow which tore his heart.

His pain was so dreadful, so unbearable that without knowing what he was doing, unconscious of what might come out of that sorrow, he had only one passionate desire, to be rid of his suffering, never to find himself again in the frightful world he had lived through that day; in which he had lived the most awful and horrible of all earthly dreams. With a trembling hand he felt for the drawer of the night table, opened it, seized the cool and heavy mass of his revolver, and uttering a deep and joyful sigh, he opened his mouth and with all his strength, joyfully, calmly, he pulled the trigger.

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